A WOMAN FOR MAYOR

HELEN M. WINSLOW

A Woman for Mayor

A Novel of To-day

By

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FOREWORD

"Chimerical!" the average man will exclaim when he reads the title of this book.

"But why not?" his wife will answer.

"Worth trying," the reformers and philanthropists will add.

"One of us," the suffragette will conclude.

And there may be a grain of truth in every answer. But the idea is not absolutely new. At this writing, there is a woman-mayor in one of the smaller cities of the middle states in America; while over in England there are, I believe, two women doing good work in the municipal chair.

And again, "Why not?" Housekeeping is a woman's business. It is the primeval instinct at the bottom of every

woman's heart. The average American and English home is a clean, sweet, sanitary and well-governed institution,—made and kept so by some woman. God made women to be wives, mothers and home-makers; and if our modern conditions have sent some of us out into the world to earn our own living and perhaps to support somebody else, the instinct remains—as witness the thousands of tiny flats or cottages where these women dwell and maintain a home, "be it ever so humble." And so, if we are the natural housekeepers, the conservators of health and morals and civic pride, why not a woman at the head of municipal affairs?

The suffragette, the reformer, the philanthropist, the average wife are right, too. As for the average man—let him read the story of Roma's woman-mayor and think it over. And if he does not decide to vote for a woman as mayor, perhaps he will come to see that woman's

housekeeping instinct and newly awakened civic sense, added to a revival of public honesty among men, might well combine to make a model city.

If "it is not good for man to live alone," perhaps it is not well for him to manage his City Hall alone. After all, is it "chimerical?"

H. M. W.

Cambridge, Mass.
May, 1909.

A WOMAN FOR MAYOR

CHAPTER I

An Unprecedented Proposal

ELL, why shouldn't we change it?" asked Mrs. Bateman, as she scooped out the grape-fruit that formed the first course at the P. W.'s regular monthly luncheon.

"Change it? Change what?—How?" asked several voices at once.

"The state of affairs in this city," pursued Mrs. Bateman calmly. "I have been thinking things over since I got home this fall. Everybody agrees that our little city is going to the dogs; that municipal affairs were never so muddled as

now. And now, here is Barnaby Burke running for mayor, with a ravenous pack of demagogues behind him."

"Yes, and not a decent man to run against him," added Cornelia Jewett.

"I don't see why," began the fluffy little woman in light blue, "I don't see why no genuine, honest, upright gentleman will allow his name to be used. Rudolph says it has got so that nobody but a politician will consent to be mayor of Roma."

"They're all afraid of the demagogues," put in another. "There's Albert Turner; he ought to stand as a candidate. But I suppose he wouldn't?" She turned to a large fair lady across the table who was placidly consuming her soup.

"My husband isn't interested in politics," was the reply. "His business affairs are too pressing."

"That's the trouble with most of the men," commented another. "They are too much absorbed in their own affairs to care much what happens to the community. We need a little more of the socialistic spirit."

"Oh, dreadful!" muttered another. "We shall be preaching anarchy next."

"And Granville Mason—or Geoffrey Bateman," added the fluffy lady in blue.

"My husband said last night that politics had sunk to such a pass in this town that no decent man would touch the City Hall with a pair of tongs," said Mrs. Mason. "That's the answer he gave a couple of men who came from Headquarters to ask him to stand. And he said that whatever decent man accepted the nomination was sure to be defeated. He doesn't care to be the figure-head of Defeat."

"That's the way they all feel," said

Gertrude Van Deusen. "I wish I were a man. I'd run for mayor! I wouldn't let the figure of Defeat worry me. I'd make a fight, I would, and we'd see if the demagogues had everything their own way."

"Why not run, then?" asked Mrs. Bateman, smiling across the table.

"I'd get every decent man roused up, for once," said Gertrude, enthusiastically, "I'd go into every ward and organize—as they do. I'd work among the poor, the illiterate, the unfortunate; and I'd rouse the rich and educated, too. That's the class that need awakening in this town."

"Then you're the right candidate," said Mrs. Bateman. "Why don't you take it? Really, now, why not?"

"O, Mrs. Bateman, I was only imagining a case." Miss Van Deusen was blushing and confused now. "Of course

I couldn't run for office, not really."

"Why not?" asked the elder woman in the calm, judicial way which made her a leader among women. "Why not? The town is going to the dogs—or rather, to the demagogues. We need a complete revolution in Roma. We women have the vote in this state; why not take matters into our own hands? Why not have a woman for mayor?"

"O-o-oh!" gasped several of her hearers in the slight pause.

"Think of the field of activities that would open up before a good woman," she went on. "The condition of our paupers, of our children's institutions, of our schools. Think of the intemperance and the vagrancy and the immorality that flourish under our very noses. Yes, and the machine-politics that keep them flourishing. Oh, there is so much to be done, and our good men too busy, or—as they

claim—too high-minded to meddle with it."

"Then what would, what could a decent woman do with it?" demanded Mrs. Jewett.

"Walk through it like an angel of light," answered Mrs. Bateman. "Ladies, we as the 'Progressive Workers' have labored ten years to effect reforms in this town, to further the interests of the schools, the poor, the dependent. What have we accomplished?"

"Why, why, a little," replied Mrs. Jewett. "Enough to have made our names respected and—yes, a little to be feared."

"But not enough," resumed Mrs. Bateman. "Not so much as we ought to have done. Not so much as we might have done had the City Council been with, instead of against us, or at best, merely tolerant of us. Now here is our opportunity. The lower element has put up a

man, notoriously bad and unfit, to be mayor. The better side is all at sea. Our old mayor (weak enough, but infinitely better than Barnaby Burke) is ill with an incurable disease, and no one whose name inspires the least particle of confidence has been mentioned yet to take his place. Let us put up a good, whole-souled, fearless woman and get her elected."

"Impossible!" said Mrs. Jewett.

"We can do it," said the fluffy woman in blue. "My husband would help us; I know he would."

"But who?" asked Mrs. Mason. "Where could we find the woman?"

"Right here in our ranks," said Mrs. Bateman. "One of our own members. Gertrude, you're just the woman for us."

Miss Van Deusen did not answer. Only the quick flush showed how the possibilities of the moment found

echo in the consternation at her heart.

"You are independent both by nature and by inheritance. You represent the best element of our citizens, you have means and time, you are bound by no family ties, and you have the kind of courage for the position," urged Mrs. Bateman.

"What will the men say?" reflected Mrs. Jewett.

"It'll give 'em a shock," murmured Mrs. Mason, decidedly. "They need a shock. Yes, Gertrude, you are just the woman to try it,—to try for it, I mean. We'll all work for you,—and with you."

"Now, ladies, let us look the situation squarely in the face," said Mrs. Bateman. "I've lain awake many a night of late, thinking out things. It will mean a tremendous amount of hard and systematic work to elect a woman to the mayor's chair in Roma. But if we are thoroughly

organized and can get some of the men's leagues and clubs to endorse us, I believe we can win. Think of it seriously a few minutes, and let us keep silence for a little while."

Then ensued the strange spectacle of fifteen women sitting at luncheon — speechless. It was a custom they had, whenever an important subject came up for discussion, to take ten or fifteen minutes for silent thought instead of wasting that time in discussion that did not get anywhere; so that when the moment for talking arrived the club-members, being accustomed to exert their mental powers, were prepared to advance and weigh such arguments as might be brought forth.

"Gertrude," said Mrs. Bateman at last, "you haven't spoken yet. You see your civic duty?"

"It will call for an appalling amount of courage and self-reliance and belief in

the ideals of good government," began Gertrude — and stopped. Her voice thrilled with a new emotion and her fine eyes glowed with prophetic hopefulness.

"But the best people would be all with you," put in a young woman at the other end of the table.

"Would they, I wonder?" queried Miss Van Deusen. "From the time of the Nazarene down to today, some of the best people have found it inexpedient to stand by the right when it was presented in strange or new guise; and surely this would be a novel innovation—a woman for mayor."

"But you have courage enough," urged Mrs. Mason.

"If there was ever a woman with ideals," said Mary Snow, a newspaper woman who had not yet spoken, "her name was—is Gertrude Van Deusen."

"Friends," said Miss Van Deusen, "I'm

going to stick to my guns. I said in my haste that I'd never let the figure-head of Defeat worry or scare me; that I would put up a fight. Well, I'll make the fight, I'll stand for the nomination and if I get it, for election."

"Three cheers for Gertrude Van Deusen," cried Mrs. Mason, and a vigorous round of hand-claps was her answer. Handkerchiefs were waved and there was excitement among the P. W.'s.

"My husband has just got to take the stump for you," said the fluffy woman. "I'll make him."

"Thank you, Bella," was Miss Van Deusen's reply. "I suppose I shall be emblazoned and lauded and berated in the newspapers, and shall come out at the end of the campaign with scarcely a rag of reputation left, whether I win or lose."

"You are going to win, Gertrude," said Mrs. Bateman calmly.

"Yes, I'm going to win," answered the younger woman. And as she sat with her handsome head thrown back and her far-seeing gaze looking out and past the assembled women into the stormy future, not one of them doubted, at the moment, the truth of her confident prophecy.

CHAPTER II

A Perplexed Reformer

THE chairman of the Roma Municipal League had just finished dictating his morning's letters and was leaning back in his half-turned swivel chair. At another desk his secretary worked perfunctorily, awaiting orders from his chief.

"Anything from Wilkins?" asked the latter.

"Worse. Won't live many weeks. Going South tomorrow," answered the secretary.

"Or Bateman?—or Mason?"

"Mason wouldn't touch politics with a pair of tongs,—so he says," the secretary answered. "As for Judge Bateman,—

I tell you, Allingham, if such men as he would do their duty, there'd be some hope of cleaning out the Augean stables. But it's hopeless. There isn't a decent Republican citizen in this town who'll take hold with us,—I mean as candidate for mayor."

"The more shame to Roma, then," said Allingham. "Things have come to a pretty state of graft when—"

He stopped suddenly, for the door was opening and Mrs. Bateman walked in. With her were two other women, one white-haired and graciously dignified, the other young and tall and handsome.

"Good-morning, Mr. Allingham," said Mrs. Bateman, taking the hand which the young man, coming forward, stretched forth. "May I present you to Mrs. Stillman and Miss Van Deusen? And may we have a few minutes' talk with you?"

"Certainly," he replied, wondering

what these society women could want with the Municipal League, "certainly. Be seated."

The secretary slipped quietly from the room while the visitors drew up in a half-circle around the chairman's desk.

"We are sure to give you a surprise," began Mrs. Bateman, "so we may as well tell you at once. We are going to enter city politics."

"That's good," answered Allingham. "I trust you're going to offer us an available candidate for mayor? That's the greatest need in Roma today."

"We are," said Mrs. Bateman, smiling.

"Good!" cried Allingham, with enthusiasm. "I was just saying to Morgan, here, that if Judge Bateman would consent to run,—or rather, he was saying it and I was assenting, when you came in. I hope you're going to offer the Judge on the altar of municipal duty, Mrs. Bate-

man. He would carry the city."

"No, indeed. Better than that," replied the Judge's wife.

"Far better, we think," added Mrs. Stillman.

"Mr. Allingham, the women of Roma are going to put forth their own candidate," pursued Mrs. Bateman.

"Good, again. Since the women can vote, I don't see why, if you all get out and work, you can't elect anybody you see fit."

"O, do you think so? Do you really believe that?" said Gertrude Van Deusen, who had not spoken before.

"I do," solemnly asseverated the young man. "'You women can do whatever you undertake. Women without the vote can do almost anything they choose, here in the United States. But where they have the right of suffrage, they have absolutely everything in their hands. You've

given me great courage. For, if you women really mean business, and will join your forces with the Municipal League —" he paused a little.

"That's why we have come," said Mrs. Stillman.

"Then we are sure of victory. Now if you can bring Judge Bateman or,—a better man, I think you said,—to accept the nomination, we can overthrow the gang of grafters at City Hall and establish good government here in Roma once more. Who is your man?"

"Miss Gertrude Van Deusen." Mrs. Bateman's eyes twinkled as she pronounced the name; for she knew well the conservative position occupied by all the Allingham family on 'the woman question.'

The chairman of the Municipal League gasped. Surely he had not heard aright. He turned to the younger woman,

who sat smiling at him, confident of his support. Alas! What had he been saying?

"I am delighted to feel that we have the Municipal League behind us," Mrs. Bateman was saying. "We mean to arouse every woman in this town, and make them vote, ———"

"But, ladies," began Allingham, already floundering in the dust of expediency, "have you thought?—Do you realize what you are doing? Under ordinary circumstances—in well-regulated towns perhaps,—but a woman for mayor?—In Roma? I'm afraid it wouldn't do."

"But you just said we could do anything we pleased?" began Mrs. Stillman.

"In the way of help, yes," replied the chairman, sore beset. "But this would be such an innovation."

"Now, Jack Allingham," said Mrs. Bateman, who had known him all his life,

"I know this comes with a shock to you, —I know how difficult the problem seems at this minute. But don't decide now. Take time to think. Consult with some of your leaders. We want your co-operation. We believe that together we can establish the right kind of government in City Hall. But we are determined to fight for our candidate,—and to win. Unless, indeed, you succeed in putting up a much better man than any yet mentioned for the place."

"Then here is where you throw down the glove?" asked Allingham, recovering his equanimity, "and I've to—"

"You're not to decide until you've had time to think, to reason with yourself, to consult your leaders, and to arrive at a conclusion," answered Mrs. Bateman, rising. "And now, we'll go."

They said good-by and left him standing in the middle of the room, dazed and

indignant at the tide of affairs. Even then he noted that turn of Miss Van Deusen's fine shoulders and the invincible way she carried her head.

"What a splendid woman she must be," he said to himself. "A genuine,—but I'm an egregious idiot,—a blanked blunderer. A pretty scrape I am in! Why didn't I wait until they declared themselves? And Miss Van Deusen! She must think me a fool. But a woman for mayor, indeed!"

"What do you suppose I've just heard?" exclaimed the secretary, hurrying in again. "Blatchley says the club women of Roma are going into the campaign with a vengeance,—that they are going to put up a woman—the daughter of old Senator Van Deusen. I don't believe it. —And yet, wasn't she one of those women who just went out?"

"She was," replied Allingham. "She is. Whether she will be, remains to be

seen. You can't tell what a woman—"

"Then it's true?" Morgan's tone was incredulous.

"Yes, I suppose so," returned the chairman. "The women are going to turn in and work. It is possible they may win. But what a thing for Roma to do! I don't see how we can—"

"Then they came for help from the League?" asked Morgan, still more incredulously.

"They came," replied Allingham, "to offer to co-operate with us. They asked no help, come to think of it; they just offered to co-operate and they seem to have a very definite idea of what they are going to do,—women!" he finished abruptly, remembering his rash endorsement of their plans before their unfolding.

"I'm not certain but it would be a good thing for the town," began the secretary. "A radical change would—"

"Morgan," interrupted his chief, "we should make ourselves ridiculous, we should be a laughing-stock for the whole state. I shall never consent," he added, with the more heat when he recalled Gertrude's confident poise and—how he had already half pledged himself to their cause.

"I suppose you'll call a meeting of the committee to consider their plan?" asked Morgan. "If they are really in earnest, these women are a factor to be seriously considered, whether for or against."

"Oh, yes, I suppose so," answered Allingham, turning back to his desk. "But I was brought up to believe a woman's place was at home with her husband and children."

"So was I," said Morgan, who was a privileged friend as well as secretary. "But the teachings of twenty years ago are out of place today. Indeed, they are

as old-fashioned as they were a hundred years before. Miss Van Deusen is a magnificent woman,—the fit daughter of the old Senator."

"You know her?" said Allingham, irrelevantly.

"Well, no, not exactly. I've met her. But my cousins know her well, and she must be,—from all I hear, a thoroughly womanly woman. And, they all say, will marry Armstrong."

"Let her keep out of politics, then," growled Allingham. "Look here. A woman like that, according to my mind, would better get down on her knees and scrub her own front stairs than try to clean out City Hall. And she's not the woman for either job."

He chewed his moustache savagely, and strode out of the room, knocking over his chair in the process and causing his stenographer considerable alarm as he

banged the door together on his way out. Morgan looked after him and smiled.

CHAPTER III

Learning the Ropes

HE next morning's newspapers were embellished with scare-head-lines, all more or less complimentary to the women's candidate.

"Women Take Matters in their Own Hands."

"Senator's Daughter Runs for Mayor."

"Men to be Laid on the Political Shelf."

"Senator Van Deusen Will Turn in His Grave if Daughter Accepts Nomination."

were some of the headlines which Roma editors had produced by late use of mid-

night oil, and the articles that followed them were incredulous, mildly tolerant, openly snobbish or given over to ridicule, according to the policy of their several papers.

One of them read:

"It is both a disgrace and a menace to this fair city that city politics have sunk to such a level that our best men will have nothing to do with them, and that no one with the ideals of good government, other than a handful of women, will undertake the improvement of our municipal government. With all deference to the ladies,—and who knows their many charming qualities better than we?—it is inevitable that, 'trained to keep silence in the churches'—(and the City Hall as well) —our women are without the large-minded grasp of affairs,—the broad and liberal judgment, necessary to cope with these affairs. Neither can we as self-

respecting husbands and fathers, consent to see them so belittle their own dignity and influence as to step out into the arena of public life. The election of a woman,—no matter how able and high-minded she might be,—would be a step downward for our city. It can never be."

Another editor said:

"*The late Senator Van Deusen was one of the most distinguished jurists in the country. He had a mind singularly open to the best interests of his native town; his constituents always knew where to find him on questions of law and polity. He did not favor woman suffrage, nor giving important offices to the 'weaker sex'; although personally he was distinguished by a gentle courtesy for and towards women. What, then, would he say to this wild proposition of a few so-called 'progressive' women to put his daughter in the mayoral chair of Roma? Verily he*

would turn in his grave. Neither can we believe that this movement has the sanction of one who was so near and dear to the late senator's heart, nor that Miss Van Deusen herself has given her consent to let her name be used as candidate for the highest office in the city."

A third paper announced:

"It is not to be wondered at that the women of Roma, casting around them to view the kind of men who occupy high seats in Roma politics, should say 'we will have none of them' and should desire to enforce a little petticoat government themselves. Roma has long been proud of its homes, its wives, its mothers and its housekeepers. Perhaps it would be for the public good, were we to set a few of these model housewives to cleaning up City Hall. Let them go ahead and elect a woman-mayor. Then let her proceed to eject the money-changers from the

temple. Perhaps the women can do it. Certainly we men cannot,—or do not."

Gertrude Van Deusen read these articles during the hour after breakfast when a woman loves to "drop down" for a little in her library, with her feet to the fire, as if to gather her forces for the day.

"It is what I must expect, I suppose," she said to the cousin who shared her home. "Man's favorite method of defeating a candidate from time immemorial has been to villify him in the newspapers. What can a mere woman expect?"

"Well, it all adds to the gaiety of politics," returned her cousin. "What shall you do about it?"

"Nothing. At least, I don't know. I have already sent for Bailey. He will advise me. He knows all the ins and outs of politics."

"And he's secretary of the Union Club,

isn't he?" asked the cousin. "At least, he was. Although that isn't a political club, still its influence would be worth a great deal."

"If we can get it," added Gertrude.

Bailey Armstrong was her second cousin and since the Senator's death had acted as adviser to Miss Van Deusen whenever she could be imagined to need advice. He was a rising lawyer with considerable political influence, and, what cheered the two women most this morning, he was a thorough feminist.

Senator Van Deusen had been dead only three years. He had left a large fortune to his daughters, one of whom had married and gone to Europe. The other lived here on the handsome estate that had long been one of the show-places of the town. Surrounded by every luxury, with no want left unsupplied, there were many to wonder why Gertrude

should consent to be a candidate for public office. But her wealth had not so carefully guarded her that the modern unrest of her sex could not penetrate her soul, and she was strongly possessed of a desire to do something for the public good.

Educated thoroughly and broadly, in an American college and later at Girton, her mind had been developed still further through constant association with her father. Her life with him in Washington had unfitted her for the fashionable career which she might have had if she had desired. Several times her hand had been sought in marriage, once by a diplomat of renown, but so far love had not touched her heart and she was not a woman to marry for any other cause. She was now thirty and looking forward instead of backward (as unmarried women of her age once did) towards a "career."

"I think Bailey will run in on his way down town," she said, rising and walking to the front window, where her slight form stood silhouetted against the late-September sunshine that shimmered and filtered through the plate glass. "There's the postman."

A moment later a letter was handed in to her. She tore it open and read:

"Dear Miss Van Deusen:

I've just heard, privately, that the Municipal League has turned us down. How's that for their boasted progress and reform? For they will combine with the Burke crowd. But never mind. Keep a brave heart and we'll win out yet.

Yours to command,
Mary Snow."

"You're wanted at the telephone," said the maid at the door, and Gertrude hurried out to find that it was Mrs. Bate-

man at the other end of the wire.

"I'm so wrathy, I don't know what to say," she began. "I have a letter from John Allingham. Shall I read it to you?"

"Oh, yes," said Gertrude.

"Well,—*'Dear Mrs. Bateman:'* he begins. *'At a meeting of our directors last night, we decided,—regretfully, I beg you to believe,—that it would not be wise nor safe for the Municipal League to accept the woman's candidate for mayor. We beg that you will change your mind and select, if you choose (or at least, endorse) a good man for that office. In which case we shall gladly meet you more than half way in any plan you may have for his election. Awaiting your reply and hoping most earnestly for your reconsideration and co-operation with us, I am,*

Most respectfully yours,

John Allingham, Chairman.'

There! What do you think of that?"

"I'm not surprised," answered Gertrude. "Did you not perceive how uncomfortable he was when he discovered who our candidate was—after all his talk about the influence of women in public affairs? He began to crawl and hedge even then."

"I know it," Mrs. Bateman replied, "but I didn't think he would go against us. He's always been such a nice boy. But now,—"

"Moreover," interrupted Gertrude, "I've just heard that the League will combine with the Burke forces, if it comes to a choice between us."

"Oh—not so bad as that," said Mrs. Bateman. "What are you going to do? It doesn't frighten you?"

"My dear," and Gertrude's gentle tone had a ring that was familiar to those who had known the Senator, "did you ever know a Van Deusen to scare easily?

They may defeat me, but they will not frighten me. I've sent for Bailey and after I've had a good long confab with him, I'll run over to talk with you."

"That's good. You're true blue," was the response.

As Gertrude turned from the telephone, Bailey Armstrong was entering.

"Well, well, what's this I hear?" he exclaimed, coming forward with outstretched hand. "You'll have Roma shaken to its foundations if you keep on. —And I suppose you'll keep on?" he added, with a keen look into her eyes.

"I am my father's daughter," she replied, and led the way into the library, where she told him her latest news.

"I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't been there last night myself," said Bailey. "There was a pretty hot discussion. Some of us want to help you, but the majority want a precedent back of them.

And there's no precedent for a woman-mayor, you know. Say, Gertie, are you fully determined to run?—because the Augean stables aren't exactly what you've been accustomed to,—and that's what you will find."

"I'm fully determined," answered the other quietly.

"That settles it, then," said the young man. "Now let's plan out the work."

"Then you're going to help, Bailey."

"Sure thing. Want me?"

"Of course we do."

"Not 'we,' Gertie,—I," he answered in a voice as quiet and as determined as hers. "Now, I've been through several campaigns and am not only a good fighter, but I'm conceited enough to believe I'm a pretty good organizer,—and that's a hundred times better."

"Well, tell me just how to go to work to enlist the multitude, to win the popu-

lace;—in short, to get votes," said Gertrude. "How do I begin?"

"Well, there are two ways," answered the young man. "If you were a man I would say, you can break in by sheer force of audacity, without definite purpose; or, you can enter quietly, with a fixed principle in mind which you wish to see worked out in public life. The first is the old idea, the latter is the new."

"And the old way?" said Gertrude.

"Well, if you enter in the old-fashioned way, you will have to place yourself at the disposal of the chairman of some campaign committee in the city; you will read a great deal of 'literature' prepared by the committee, mostly vituperative nonsense about the opposing party; you will learn this by heart, follow the red light and the brass band to the nearest 'stump,' and mixing what you have read, but not thought out, with some

stories of considerable age and questionable humor, will deliver it all to a bored and weary audience, confident that you have established a reputation for eloquence.

"By this time you will feel like a full-fledged politician; you will become mysterious and tell everybody everything you know in confidence; secret conferences will be held behind closed doors; old clothes and a slouchy manner will be brought out to catch the labor vote; you will speak to all sorts of people, and call them by their first names, thinking all the time that, if a candidate, you would lead your ticket. As a matter of fact, you may have lost hundreds of votes."

"Yes," said Gertrude with spirit, "and then I would be taken up by the machine. They would call me a budding genius and I should look upon the boss as a great man."

"Yes," pursued Bailey, "until you begin to think for yourself. Then it will occur to you as strange that in a representative government you should be selected as a candidate of your party recommended as you have been; still more strange that the platform upon which you are to run was set up in type in the newspaper offices several hours before the convention which nominates you met, and had been submitted to the president of the railroad that runs through your town for his approval or revision."

"Yes,—and then," broke in Gertrude, "some day by accident, if I take the trouble to read at all I shall notice in a statute a little clause concealed in fifty pages of meaningless verbiage, which grants an unjust and special privilege to certain interests closely connected with the dominant party in state politics. I shall be unable to reconcile this law with

my ideas of fair play and justice, and it will occur to me that possibly it is a mistake, which can easily be remedied by appealing to the 'party leaders.' "

"And so you protest," Bailey chimed in, "and in your sweet and charming innocence you suggest that this law be amended and the special privilege abolished. The bland smile that greets your remark will get on your nerves, and you will sit down to think it over; and when you have cleared your brain of cobwebs, you will realize for the first time that machine poltics, to which you have been an unconscious party, has nothing whatever to do with ideas, principles or policies, but is purely a game of money in its last analysis; that it is a scheme to enrich a few at the expense of the many—"

"And all accomplished under the folds of the flag in the name of the 'grand old party' of Abraham Lincoln, that freed

the slaves, or the great party of Thomas Jefferson, that 'preserves the fundamental rights of man'," finished Gertrude. "When the white light begins to play upon all my surroundings in political life, I shall become disgusted and come back to sweet home-life,—or else turn around and have the fight of my life."

"I reckon," said Bailey, smiling, "that you didn't live several years in Washington—or are a great senator's daughter for nothing. But all this, you know, is the old way. You won't follow politics after this fashion. You will take up the 'new idea in politics,' which simply means that reforms should be brought about by the injection of ideas and principles at the outset rather than by campaigns against individuals for wrong-doing. It further means that everything should be done in the open and by the people themselves rather than by a few bosses who

have allied themselves with the corporations in nearly all the states of the Union."

"To be of service politically, then, according to the rules of the 'new idea,' the candidate must first ally himself with one of the organized political parties in the country?" asked Gertrude. "But what if they will not have you?"

"No," replied Bailey, "I do not mean to say that this is absolutely necessary, for there are many useful men who do not ally themselves with any party; but experience has shown, I think, that one can be of the greatest service and do the most useful work by joining a party and exerting himself at the primaries, where all government begins, to make his party stand for definite principles rather than remain an organization devoted solely to the task of dispensing patronage.—And there are other allies than the Municipal

League," he added. "No. First make a thorough study of the political situation in Roma. I presume you have done this already. You will find that not two per cent of the voters go to the primaries. The ring selects the delegates and their men nominate the candidates as they are told. There is no contest and the worst men get put in offices by the money from some trolley or railroad or other interest, simply because the people do not know—and will not take the trouble to find out what is going on. But you women can get up mass-meetings and attend primaries and do all these things, and if there is not a pretty general waking up in this town before next January, then I'll lose my guess."

"We'll do it," said Gertrude. "And I believe,—am I too confident when I say it?—that we can win."

"Well, if not, we can arouse this com-

munity as it never has been yet," was the reply. "We can wake up the people, and educate them to an intelligent vote. And we'll elect you yet, Gertie,—see if we don't."

And five minutes later, when Bailey had left for his down-town office, Gertrude was asking herself, "Why couldn't John Allingham behave as sensibly? He cannot be right and Bailey wrong. No. But I wish—"

She wheeled about very decisively and went upstairs for her hat; for things must be talked over with Mrs. Bateman.

CHAPTER IV

Practical Politics

FEW nights later several gentlemen could be seen entering the Van Deusen mansion, where they were greeted by Gertrude and her cousin, Jennie Craig. With them, too, were Mrs. Bateman, Mrs. Mason, and Mrs. Stillman. They had all met to organize the Reform Club, at Bailey Armstrong's suggestion, and he had enlisted a few of the leading members of the Union Club.

Miss Van Deusen's candidacy had been talked over at the clubhouse as elsewhere, and most of the members being old friends of her father or herself had agreed, more or less cautiously, to sup-

port her. John Allingham, with a few of the most conservative members, had prevented the Union Club from officially endorsing her, but he could not keep the several members from exercising their prerogative to work for whom they chose. And so while the Municipal League was holding a meeting at one end of the town to see if there were not some available candidate to defeat her, the new City Reform Club was being started at the other, to further the cause of Gertrude Van Deusen.

Judge Bateman opened the meeting and was made moderator, and later, elected president of the new organization, with Bailey Armstrong as secretary.

"You announce yourself here, Miss Van Deusen," asked the Judge after these preliminaries, "as candidate for mayor?"

"I do," was the answer.

"Then it becomes our affair to endorse you and to prepare our definite plan of work. That it is a most unusual, perhaps unheard-of thing to offer a young woman as candidate for the mayor's chair, we all know, goes without saying. But it seems to some of us sufficient reason for going down on our knees with thankfulness that a good and an able woman will consent to serve her city in such capacity. And we owe it to her, to ourselves as men, and to our city as voters and citizens, that we shall go out and work for her. Has anyone a definite plan of action?"

Nearly every man in the room spoke in the same strain and before ten o'clock their campaign was planned. Then the newspapers were called up and reporters began to appear. The next morning Roma had its second sensation. A leading editorial ran thus:

"*Last night at the residence of the late*

Senator Van Deusen, a number of the most prominent men and women of this town met and organized the City Reform Club, and incidentally endorsed the candidacy of Miss Gertrude Van Deusen for mayor. If this organization, which welcomes representatives from all political parties, accomplishes half of what it has set itself to do, last night will have been a historical date for Roma. It has begun with a few aristocratic leaders, but we are inclined to believe the membership will soon embrace all grades of social as well as political voters; for careless as we have been in the past, the citizens of Roma desire to stand for the best things—to have the best schools, the best citizens, the best government in the state. The chief reason, perhaps, why we have them not, is that the people have not been in touch with the executive department. The people have known nothing of what was going

on at City Hall. Now and then, we have attempted to lift the veil, but we all have been lax and easily turned aside. We confess it with shame; but we promise, as for this newspaper, to do better; and we publicly declare ourselves this morning as in sympathy with the new Reform Club. From now on The Atlas will champion the candidacy of Miss Gertrude Van Deusen as mayor of Roma, just as, for many years, we were proud to hold aloft the banner of her father, the late Senator Van Deusen."

When Gertrude read this she sat half-dazed for a moment, and then clapped her hands with gleeful surprise.

"What is it?" asked her cousin.

"The Atlas has come out for me. It endorses the Reform Club—and me. That's some of Bailey's work."

"Yes. I hope you appreciate what Bailey is doing for you," said Miss Craig.

"He would make a good mayor, himself."

"There are a dozen men in Roma who would be good mayors," answered Gertrude, "if they would. But they will not. Hence—well, I'm going to a caucus tonight. Are you going with me?"

"Oh, no, I think not. I'll go when and where it is necessary to cast my vote for you, Gertie," said Miss Craig. "But for the rest—excuse me."

Mrs. Bateman and the Judge accompanied Miss Van Deusen, however, to the nearly empty room where the first primary was being held. It was in an outlying ward, and the few men who stood about were wonder-stricken at the presence of women,—although they had seen the sex out on election days in plenty.

"Now you are seeing just how politics in Roma has been managed for a decade past. Right there in that corner," said the Judge, "you find a door with a slit in it

through which you deposit your ballot. No record is kept of your vote, and behind the door sit the leaders of the ring, already making up the returns, which show, without doubt, as this is a hostile ward, that your delegates were defeated by an overwhelming majority. Tomorrow the ring newspaper, which prints all the legal notices of the county and receives a generous income through the advertisement of corporations allied with the ring, and whose proprietor is promised a commissionership by the governor who is backing the ring, will notify its readers that the selfish office-seekers, who had contested in the primaries, have received a stinging rebuke at the hands of the voters, and their villainous attempts to destroy the party, which had so unselfishly devoted itself to the interests of the community, have fallen to the ground."

"And must this be allowed?" asked Mrs. Bateman.

"No," and the Judge's tones rang firmly. "We will call a mass-meeting in every district in the city, right away; we,—you, Miss Van Deusen, as well as I and the others,—must address the people, telling them what we mean to do, and how."

"I never faced an audience of men in my life," answered Gertrude, "but I can do it—and I will."

From that time on, there were meetings and caucuses and primaries every night. *The Atlas* was the only newspaper that came out openly, "the ring" sheet villified the "woman-question," while the others remained discreetly on the fence. But *The Atlas* had the largest circulation and its editorial policy had considerable weight with the citizens.

The "Progressive Workers" did everything possible to illustrate their name.

Every woman of the two hundred worked and talked in and out of season. They attended primaries, they called mass-meetings in every district in the city, they provided speakers at these "rallies" (some of the best from their own membership) and they saw, personally, editors and political leaders wherever they might be found. Gertrude Van Deusen, herself, appeared on the platform at most of these meetings, attended by Mrs. Bateman, Mrs. Stillman and others of the leading women of Roma; and an increasing number of voters were won over to her side, as they listened to her clear voice giving utterance to calm and judicial opinions, worthy the daughter of Roma's pet senator. Even her intimate friends were surprised to note the accuracy with which she comprehended the city's needs and the insight which she had gained into the existing state of municipal affairs.

"A long head, that woman's got," remarked one business man to another, as they left one of the rallies. "If she could get the mayoralty I'm inclined to think she'd make Roma sit up and take notice. I'm half inclined to vote for her myself."

"Oh, pshaw!" returned the other, "she's astute enough—like her father before her. But you can't tell anything about it. Let the women get the power and they'll soon have a ring and a machine and their bosses as much as the men. And they'd crowd us right off the earth. No women in mine."

The other smiled, as he thought of the speaker's household of an assertive wife and four grown-up daughters, but he only said:

"Well, I'm not sure of that; and a change of bosses might be a good thing. Amalgamated took a rush today, didn't it?"

CHAPTER V

The Opposition Candidate

JOHN ALLINGHAM was not enjoying life during these exciting days and nights. The Municipal League (which claimed to be "non-partisan") had not succeeded in settling upon a candidate, as the Republicans had not chosen any, and Burke, the choice of the Democrats, was too bitter a pill for them. The papers were not "interesting reading" for him, filled as they were with the doings of the "Progressive Workers" and Miss Van Deusen. He could not go on the street nor step inside a car, without hearing the buzz of talk about Gertrude Van Deusen,—"this young woman whose place

was in her own refined and luxurious home, but who had chosen to pose in the lime-light of publicity instead," as he said. The story of how he had met the three ladies when they had called to announce their candidate, and of how he had met them more than half-way, and then eaten his own words, had leaked out through Judge Bateman, who thought it too good to keep; and as usual, it had gone the rounds of all his friends before Allingham knew it was in circulation. When he did hear of it, he was exceeding wroth, perhaps all the more so because he had no one but himself to blame. And he was in that mood when the chairman of the Republican committee called one morning.

"Got a candidate yet?" asked Allingham as his visitor drew up his chair.

"We've got one chosen," answered the chairman, whose name was Samuel Watts,

"if he'll accept. And he's a good one."

"Well, go on," urged Allingham, as the other hesitated.

"He's got a good many points in his favor," said Watts, incisively. "He's popular with all classes, he's well-off, educated, of the best family stock, young, active, and knows how to make himself solid with the lower classes,—the working people, you know."

"Then he must be made to accept," answered Allingham. "In these times, it is the duty of such a man to accept the nomination."

"Think so?" asked the other with a grin. "Glad to hear it; for our man's name is John Allingham."

"Sam! I can't—I won't," exclaimed the chairman of the Municipal League, cursing himself inwardly for his habit of speaking his mind before he knew his premises. "This is too much—I don't

want the office—or to contend with a woman for it!"

"That's your native chivalry, Jack," answered his friend in soothing fashion. "But we've got to put up a candidate with all the good qualities she posesses, to beat her. As the refined and beautiful daughter of Senator Van Deusen, we—you and I—have only admiration for this young woman—but—by Jove! when she enters politics she must meet us on our own ground. She must expect to give and take as we do. And we are bound to beat her. You, Jack, can do it. I know of nobody else who is available—this is quite between you and me—who would be sure to do it. Surely you are not afraid of a woman? When it comes to votes you'll win—and that will put the laugh on the other side when it comes to talking about the influence of women."

"I'll do it," said Allingham impulsive-

ly. "If you'd offered it to me a month ago—before you offered it to a half dozen others instead of afterward, I'd have refused straight up and down. But now, as things stand today, I accept the nomination."

"And I may go and report to the committee?" urged Watts.

"You may."

The chairman arose and shook Allingham's hand long and heartily. Then he departed to spread the good news. When he was gone, Morgan returned to his desk.

"Do you think there is need of sending out any more of those A-128 circulars, Jack?" he asked.

"No," answered Allingham. "Morgan, I'm an egregious fool, perhaps; but I've consented to accept the Republican nomination for mayor, myself."

The secretary gave vent to a long, low whistle.

"To run against Miss Van Deusen?" he asked, at length.

"To run against Miss Van Deusen," replied Allingham.

"H-m—this contributes something to the interest of affairs," said Morgan. "But, Jack—I wish you hadn't," he added doubtfully.

"Wish away," returned Jack cheerfully, "and much good may it do you." Then he turned to his desk and began to write diligently on the document he had been preparing when Watts came in.

Half an hour later, the door opened and Bailey Armstrong entered.

"Hullo, Bailey, take a chair," was Allingham's greeting, for the two had been schoolboys together. "What's the news? How's your candidate?"

"Jack," began Bailey anxiously, "I've come down to have one more heart-to-heart talk with you about Miss Van Deu-

sen. It's a shame the Municipal League cannot endorse a noble, splendid woman like her. You know how rotten City Hall is. You ought to be the first to help in a movement to overthrow the present system. Come up with me to-night to Miss Van Deusen's. Get acquainted with her and listen to her sane talk and clear views; and then I am sure you'll come out on the right side."

"I'm on the right side now, Bailey," returned Jack, "and on the right track. It's too late to call on Miss Van Deusen."

"Why, too late?" asked Armstrong.

"Because I've already consented to accept the nomination of the Republican party," said Allingham. "I shall be her opposing candidate and I mean to beat her."

"Not by all the shades of the great Agamemnon!" exclaimed Bailey. "I'll turn every stick and stone in Roma to

defeat you. Jack, I wouldn't have believed it of you!"

"Nor I of myself," returned Allingham coolly. "If you hadn't put up a woman I'd never have consented, Bailey, old fellow. But a woman's place is at home—she is too delicate for public office."

"O, bother the woman's place," returned Armstrong, rising to go. "The modern woman's place is where she is needed most, where she can do the most good, whether it is sewing on your buttons or ruling your city. Good-bye; reckon on sure defeat next January, Jack, or I'm no guesser;" and he slammed the door behind him as he hurried away.

He went straight to Van Deusen Hall and called for Gertrude. She was at the moment sewing on buttons for herself, but soon descended, smiling, to greet

him. As he looked at her coming down the stairway, Bailey thought of the great calm of a starry night in the country. Some women always bring the sense of freshness and repose and brooding peace when they enter a room.

"You've got some news for me?" she said, giving him her hand.

"How do you know?" he asked.

"I see it in your face," was the reply. "You have news—something that disquiets you."

"Yes, I have," said Armstrong. "I may as well tell it at once. Jack Allingham is entering the lists against you. He will be the Republican candidate."

She smiled. "I am not surprised. He considers it his duty, since a woman presumes to occupy the mayor's chair. I have met his mother several times, and his aunts. He is an only child and has been brought up to believe in all the old-

time theories. I presume he knows no really fine up-to-date woman."

"No, he doesn't," replied Bailey. "He is one of the most conscientious and best fellows I ever knew, but he has been spoiled by his women-folk. I think he believes that a man is really a much superior being: that woman is only a weak imitation of God's noblest work. It's the doting aunt and the over-indulgent mother that spoil our men—"

"Undoubtedly; it is they who keep them from their best development," answered Gertrude. "But I'm rather glad on the whole, to have an opponent like Mr. Allingham—a foeman worthy of my steel, so to speak. If I win over him it will count for something, whereas to beat a man like Barnaby Burke—" She made a wry face.

"Yes—I grant that," said Bailey. "And you'll come near beating, too. We

shall have to work harder than ever, but I'll beat Jack Allingham—or bust! Excuse the slang, Gertie, but I've got to relieve my feelings."

"You always were a great boy," laughed Miss Van Deusen, "and you always will be. Here's Jessie with letters. Get her to play to you while I read mine."

He went into the music-room and left her by the open fire. One of the letters bore the emblem of the Municipal League. She tore it open and read:

"My Dear Miss Van Deusen:

As the daughter of your respected and beloved father and as the hereditary flower of womanhood of Roma, I owe you both allegiance and admiration. But holding, as I do, the sincere conviction that women belittle themselves and lower the standards of all humanity when they enter the public arena, I feel justified in

announcing myself your opposition candidate. I have just consented to allow my name to be used, and I feel that I wish you to know it at once.

Yours respectfully,
John Allingham."

And having read it, she placed it on the glowing coals, smiling softly to herself the while.

CHAPTER VI

A Political Trick

THE campaign was a furious one after that. The women, instead of leaving the management of things to men, were stirred to wonderful activity. They worked, not only among the men of their own acquaintance, but among the working-people; they held meetings in factories at noon, or in school-rooms or cheap halls at night in the districts where the factory-hands lived. They spoke at mass-meetings and rallies, and if they did not appear in torchlight processions, they saw that many banners were carried in them, bearing the women's motto and legend. It was a hard fight, but a good one, and

the cause of womanhood as well as of good government was advanced by it.

When Sam Watts, for instance, with his pockets well-lined, went down into the district where lived the employees of the Roma Ice Company, he did not find it so easy to disburse that money as he had expected.

"No," said one man, "I can't forget that Miss Van Deusen's been good to me and mine."

"O, she is the Roma Ice Company, of course," returned Watts. "That is one of her assets; but you people are being ground down to hard labor every day to keep her in luxury—don't you see that?"

"I see," answered the man, "that she is almost the only employer I know who takes a personal interest in us."

"Yes, when votes are to be counted," sneered Watts.

"Listen," said the man. "Two years

ago, when the strike was on, and there was a good deal of hard times around, she came right down among us and helped. She didn't sit down at home and let us take the consequences of the strike (no, I never was in favor it. I only went out with the rest because I had to.) And she didn't send us a check as if we were just objects of charity. She came right down into the tenements and talked with our women-folks. She found out what they needed and provided it when it was necessary. She sat up all night with the sick baby of one of the strike leaders. My! but he was a shamed man the next day! And my own woman, why, man alive! when she had her baby and we'd no money at all, Gertrude Van Deusen sent a nurse and a doctor and paid for 'em; but more than that, she came down and stood by my wife (who was once a maid of hers), all through it. Do you

suppose we are going back on a woman like that? No sirree! The votes of the Roma Ice Company are hers—to a man."

So it was that while the politicians were declaiming against her as a cold-blooded aristocrat, there were poor people all over the city who had some tale to tell of kindness done in secret, either by her or her father.

Towards the last of the campaign, a demand grew for a joint debate. Miss Van Deusen had appeared on the platform many times, and defined her attitude on public issues in Roma quite clearly. John Allingham had done the same, for he had a good following of the business men of the city, while the demagogues made a formidable showing for their candidate, Barnaby Burke. There was a growing feeling that there must be a fusion of the woman's ticket with the Allingham forces, but the former would

not withdraw their candidate, and Allingham having put his hand to the municipal plough would not take it away.

Consequently, both sides agreed to a joint debate to be held at a great mass meeting the Monday evening before the election Tuesday. This was not without opposition from within each party, and there were some who hinted darkly that it might not come off.

All through the Monday preceding the debate Gertrude Van Deusen worked in her library, to prepare her speech for the evening. She had become familiar enough with her own voice so that she spoke easily and well to audiences of all sizes and degrees of intelligence, but this evening was to witness a trial of strength, a matching of wits which put her on her mettle. For John Allingham was a fine speaker, with a magnetic presence, clear logic, and a control of his audience that

made him a powerful opponent, and Gertrude Van Deusen, although she would have died rather than own it, trembled secretly at the coming contest.

At six she ate her dinner with as much calmness as was possible under the circumstances, and proceeded to dress for the evening. She was one of the women who realize that appearances count with an audience, as well as words, and she put on her most becoming array. At half-past seven her maid came up from the door:

"They've sent for you," she announced. "An automobile is at the door."

"Why, I didn't know the committee was going to send for me," said Miss Van Deusen. "I ordered the carriage for a quarter to eight. Go down and ask the chauffeur—no, never mind. It's all right, no doubt. I'll go with hm. Call up Thomas and tell him he needn't take the

horses out tonight. But first hand me my fur coat and put on my over-shoes."

The maid obeyed and in five minutes more Gertrude Van Deusen was being tucked into the electric cab, by a chauffeur well wrapped up and muffled to his ears. The glass doors were closed tightly, Gertrude congratulating herself that she was shut away from the cold, clear January air, and that her horses might stand in their comfortable stalls. And then they whizzed away.

It was some moments before she noticed that they were going up the street instead of down it; but immediately she remembered that the city was repaving one of the streets between her home and the hall where she was to appear, and since they were evidently going to take the "longer way around" she settled back in her seat and began, once more, to rehearse the carefully-prepared speech for

the evening. She had gone nearly through with it when she noticed that the streets, instead of being more thickly settled as they approached her intended destination, were wider, with scattered residences along the way; and that they were going at a rapid pace, over the smooth ground. It was a bright moonlit night, and there was a clear sky twinkling with stars. The onrush of the cab made no impression of a wind against her cheek, because she was so well shut away from the outside world, but through the glass windows she noted the beautiful, quiet night, and saw that they were fast leaving the city behind and gliding into the country.

Through the glass she could see the chauffeur sitting, almost immovable, intent upon his machine, and turning neither to the right or left, and a feeling of terror seized upon her as she realized

that she was being carried away she knew not where, and that she was quite alone and helpless. She called to the chauffeur, but he paid no attention whatever to her cries. She shook the doors to her cab-prison, but she could not open them; she rapped on the glass front close to the driver's ears, but for all the notice he took of her she might have been a moth fluttering in the background of the night. And all the time they were rushing on, on, on, into the great calm of the moonlit night, beyond the glare of electric lights, beyond the suburban dwellings, beyond the cheerful farmhouses, and into the wooded roads which she recognized as belonging to a neighboring town, at least fifteen miles from Roma. She called again and again; she pounded the glass-front with the silver top of her purse—the only thing in her possession which could make a noise, but still the chauffeur sat motionless as

if he were entirely alone. She rose in her seat and called to the driver of a team as they passed it; she tried to get the attention of a solitary foot-passenger, but the car flew too fast, and if the men saw her she was out of their reach before they could answer.

Then she settled back, exhausted. She realized now, that she was the victim of some trick of the opposition party. She looked at her watch. A quarter of nine. By now she should have made her speech. John Allingham was having everything his own way now, beyond a doubt. Possibly—probably, he was behind this attempt to kidnap her—afraid to meet a woman on a public platform; for that was it, disguise the thing as they might by saying he would not debate with a woman. Contemptible!

And still they flew on into the shining, moonlight night, out from the fine old

wood road, along the river-way, miles and miles away.

If they were unwilling to match wits with a woman, why did they not say so? Why condescend to kidnaping a woman and running away with her from the fight? If this was the kind of a man John Allingham was—

They were turning into a cross-road now which led up-hill into another strip of wood. Shadows of tall pines and oak trees made it like a solemn temple, into the arched aisles of which they seemed to be entering. Gertrude did not see, and apparently the motionless automaton before her did not, that other machine gliding on in the shadowy road above and toward them. There was a jar and a crash and they all came down together.

Gertrude Van Deusen, inside her prison, was not hurt, but at last, her chauffeur was shaken out of his stoicism.

Extricating himself from the wreck, he hurried to unfasten the door which was uppermost.

"Are you hurt?" he asked, speaking for the first time in twenty-two miles.

"I don't know. I think not. But let me out," she answered.

He drew her out and she was soon on the ground again. There was a groan.

"Who is that? There is a man hurt somewhere. We must get him out;" she said. "Hurry."

By this time the driver of the other machine had crawled out and was on his feet.

"It's Allingham," he said, in a tone of horror. "He's under the gear—"

"Then get him out—quick," cried Gertrude.

Her coolness and quickness of wit stimulated the two men and they set about releasing the imprisoned sufferer. But it

was Gertrude Van Deusen who directed them and drew him out from under the wrecked machine, as the two chauffeurs lifted the weight above him.

It was John Allingham—quite unconscious.

CHAPTER VII

An Unusual Ride

E SHALL have to go back to the nearest farmhouse for help," said the chauffeur who had driven Gertrude Van Deusen. "We cannot get the machines apart without help. Can you stay here with him—alone?"

"Yes, yes, go on," she replied. "But first open his coat and get me his handkerchief." She was sitting on the ground with Allingham's head in her lap, staunching with her mouchoir the blood which flowed fast from a cut on his forehead. "And hurry, for we must get him to a doctor as quickly as possible."

A moment later she was alone in the

beauty of the night, except for the man who lay unconscious beside her. She folded her own handkerchief and laid it on the wound and then arranged the larger one as a bandage. In tying it around his forehead, her fingers came in contact with his face—a white upturned face which appealed to her pity so deeply that she stopped to smooth his wide brow, as if he were a suffering child.

Allingham awoke suddenly as if an electric current flowed suddenly through his veins. His eyes opened, and gazing upward, he looked straight into the clear face above him, which was, also, changed and white in the moonlight. For a moment he did not recognize her. It was as if their kindred spirits had met in clear space, away from all earthly conditions. But in a moment, returning consciousness drew the veil between them and he sat up, still clinging to her hand.

"You!" he cried, "and here? What has happened? Why are you here?"

"We are having our joint debate," she replied whimsically, her voice betraying nothing of the tumult within. "But we are having it in an unlooked for place and fashion. And you have the worst of it. Be careful, please. Don't try to get up. The men have gone back for help. Our affairs seem to be decidedly mixed; but never mind; we shall soon be out of the woods—literally, I trust."

"How can you keep so calm?" said Allingham. "Most women would have gone to pieces. Why aren't you in tears?"

"Perhaps to demonstrate my fitness for the mayoralty of Roma," she replied with a touch of sarcasm. "There, the men are coming, with two others."

It was the work of but a few moments to get one automobile righted again, when it was found to be not seriously im-

paired; but the other one was wrecked beyond possibility of help that night.

"You'll both have to go back to Roma in this one," said Gertrude's chauffeur to Allingham.

"If you'll permit me?" queried Allingham to the young woman standing erect in the shade of the whispering pines. "But if you would prefer, I will stay at the farmhouse."

"No, no," answered Gertrude. "You must get back to the city and your physician at once. That is, if you can endure the ride."

"O, I'm all right. I was stunned a little, that's all, and my forehead seems to have been scratched quite a bit," said Allingham. "But come, if we are to ride together, we must get in."

He helped her to her seat and got in himself, while the two men tucked them in warmly and then climbed into the front

seat. It was but a few moments before they were on the road again, spinning towards the city more than twenty miles away.

"Now, tell me," Allingham began, after making sure they were on the return road, "how did you happen to be here? I am devoured with curiosity."

"Don't you know—surely?" she returned.

"Know?—I? How should I?" was the answer in a tone that convinced the young woman, for the time being, anyway.

"Why," she hesitated. "It looked suspicious—or at least—well, somebody was behind it."

"You don't mean to say you were kidnaped, too," cried Allingham. "I seem to see light ahead."

"I had just ordered my carriage to go to the hall and was all ready to start," explained Gertrude, "when the automobile

appeared, the chauffeur saying he had been sent for me. I supposed the committee had sent him—"

"Just as I supposed my committee had sent for me," interposed Allingham.

"Once in, and off, we came so fast I hardly realized anything until we were out of town; and when I tried to open the door I couldn't, it was fastened some way, on the outside; while as for making that automaton hear—well!—"

"The same in my case," said Allingham. "I was locked in. I've been attributing my ride to Bailey Armstrong's minions—and I presume you've been giving mine the credit for yours; but we probably owe it to the City Hall crowd. For Burke, I hear, is getting a good deal worried over tomorrow's election. But here we are, alive and with reason to be thankful."

"O, no, no," cried Gertrude, "think of

that hall full of disappointed people—of the friends who believe in our good faith —of how we have failed to keep our promises. O, no, we cannot be thankful!"

"But think of the accident and of what might have happened in the crash—and didn't," he answered. "And let us forget for the rest of the ride, the political situation and that we are opposing candidates." To tell the truth, John Allingham was still tingling from that electric touch, although faint from loss of blood, and judging by the pale face of his companion, he felt that neither could endure much more. Gertrude, looking out of the cab-window at the river gleaming under the bright moonlight, was suddenly reminded of a night she had once passed by the Danube, and fell to talking of it.

Allingham, who had traveled much abroad, and had a keen memory, welcomed the reminiscent mood, and the desultory

conversation for the rest of the way was such as might have been expected between two intelligent, sympathetic acquaintances, thrown together during an idle hour.

It was long after twelve when they glided into Roma again. The hall had been closed an hour before and the disappointed audience, after listening impatiently to the extempore speakers who had tried to fill the time until the principals in the joint debate should appear, had gone home doubtful of the morrow.

The auto stopped outside the gate in front of Van Deusen Hall and one of the chauffeurs, still muffled to the eyes, helped Gertrude to the ground. John Allingham had stepped out first. But before he could remonstrate with them for leaving a lady on the street alone and past midnight, in fact, just as he was beginning to ask angrily, why they did not

drive in, the man slammed the door, jumped to his seat, and the cab glided away.

"And we haven't the faintest idea who they are?" said Miss Van Deusen. "They didn't have any number—"

"If it wasn't left with the wreck," answered Allingham, "and they were, doubtless, too sharp for that. They have taken it off and hidden it. But I shall have this thing looked into. A kidnaping affair like this can't fail of discovery."

"But neither of us could describe the men," returned the young woman. "I couldn't—could you? They were thoroughly disguised in their big coats and caps; and mine did not speak, only that once."

"Nor mine, except at the wreck," said Allingham. "Nor do I know of an electric cab in Roma. But nevertheless, you must go in."

He walked up to the door with her. The house was all alight, her cousin waiting in the greatest alarm. For there had been much telephoning around the city when the speakers failed to appear at the meeting, and the utmost consternation had been felt at their disappearance.

Jessica Craig met her cousin with a sob, and a demand for explanations in the same breath. But Gertrude was insisting that Allingham should step in and rest, late as it was.

"He is hurt," she explained to her cousin. "He must have something done. Telephone to Dr. Dean immediately, James."

It did not take much urging to induce her opponent to enter the hospitable mansion, for he was now weak and faint. Once inside, the warm atmosphere proved too much and he had to be helped to a sofa. Stimulants were brought and ad-

ministered, and Gertrude herself assisted in getting him to the library to await the doctor.

When that functionary appeared he found a severe scalp wound and a pulse which bounded so high that he ordered him to his own carriage, bearing him off to the Allingham home as soon as he could apply the requisite number of plasters and bandages to his head. An anxious mother and aunt were already preparing to receive him as an invalid, the news of the accident and of his return to Roma having been telephoned. But before he went, he found a chance to murmur to Gertrude Van Deusen his thanks for her flying of the flag of truce, and his appreciation of her kindness.

Feverish as he was, he half hoped she might win next day, whenever in that long night, he recalled the look on her face, as she bent over him in the moonlight.

As for Gertrude, she tossed through sleepless hours, after the excitement had passed and everybody had gone home, thinking, thinking, thinking.

"What a pity for him to feel as he does about women," she said to herself. "A man full of all tenderness and chivalry at heart, he is behind his age. I wonder how we would have met if I had never gone into politics. I wonder if he would have liked me then, really?"

CHAPTER VIII

Modern Journalism

HE "Progressive Workers" has been especially busy in arranging for the joint debate between their own and the Republican candidates, and they were in full force and early at the meeting. When eight o'clock came and Gertrude Van Deusen had not appeared, they felt no anxiety, but as the moments passed and she did not come, they began to be surprised and then alarmed.

"Gertrude is always prompt," said Mrs. Bateman, as they waited in the anteroom. "I cannot imagine what is keeping her. Telephone over to her house, Anna, and see if she has left, won't you?

I have to attend to things here."

Mrs. Stillman hurried to the telephone, coming back later with a puzzled expression on her aristocratic features.

"Her cousin says she left there at half past seven in an automobile," she said. "It is half past eight now."

"An automobile?" said Mrs. Bateman. "Did anybody send for her, I wonder?"

No one seemed to know. Their candidate had always been transported in her own carriage and no one had thought of sending for her. Still, some friend might have done so—and in an automobile, Bailey Armstrong, for instance—who had a new one. Nothing was more natural than—

But just then Bailey came into the ante-room.

"It's the strangest thing," he began, "Miss Van Deusen does not come, and nobody seems to know where she is. And

Jack Allingham is missing, too. None of his friends can account for his absence. What are we going to do?"

"Do?" repeated Mrs. Bateman. "What can we do?"

"The audience—a crowded one—is getting impatient," Bailey went on. "We've got to begin somehow. The other side have a speaker whom they can put on, but we—"

"Go on yourself, Bailey," said Mrs. Mason. "You'll have to. We can fill up the time somehow until Gertrude comes."

After a hurried consultation with the representatives from Allingham's committee, the meeting was opened and the speaking began. But although those who addressed the audience were eloquent enough, they were unprepared, and moreover, were conscious that their listeners were keeping one eye upon the door; in short, everybody present desired only to

hear the two appointed speakers; so that the affair was most perfunctory. The minutes grew into hours, and these did not arrive. Mrs. Mason, Mrs. Bateman, even Mary Snow, were sent out to the platform to represent the woman's side, and although they were well received, the meeting broke up at eleven o'clock with a distinct sense of disappointment, not to say failure. The audience dispersed with but one question:

"Where are they? and why have they not come?"

A little after two, Gertrude called up Mrs. Bateman and told her of the events which had transpired since she had started out for the joint debate; but it was too late to send explanations to any other member of the committee.

"Are you going to let it get into the newspapers?" asked Mrs. Bateman.

"Not I," said Gertrude. "Think what

a miserable sensation it would make."

"Then I must call up Allingham's house and ask them to suppress it," answered Mrs. Bateman. "But what excuse can we make? Something must be said in explanation."

"I don't know," said Gertrude wearily. "I leave that to you and Judge Bateman. I do not want it to get into the newspapers."

"Very well; then I will call up the Allingham's" responded Mrs. Bateman. Which she did, and found that Mrs. Allingham was horror-stricken at the bare suggestion that the kidnaping of her son should be written up for the press.

"He is asleep," she said, "and has been since the doctor put on his last bit of plaster; but as soon as he wakens I will ask him what I shall tell you to say. Anyhow, we will keep it out of the papers, if possible."

But all the same the next morning the story was featured in every journal in town, with more or less display according to the style of each individual paper. Naturally, the more conservative of them strove to tell the story correctly and insinuated that the Burke party were behind the "contemptible trick;" but the sheet which upheld the "City Hall crowd," as all Roma termed its municipal authorities, gave a most sensational account, telling it with a flippant and gleeful inaccuracy which spoke volumes for the accomplishments of modern yellow journalism. It headed its article thus:

"CANDIDATES IN COLLISION"

"HANDSOME WOMAN CANDIDATE AND ARISTOCRATIC ASPIRANT FOR MAYORALTY FLEE FROM JOINT DEBATE, ONLY TO CRASH TOGETHER IN THE WOODS AND RETURN IN ELECTRIC CAB TOGETHER.

A portion of the article ran as follows:

"For weeks the advocates of higher education for women and the shriekers for female suffrage who have been pushing the daughter of the late Senator Van Deusen forward in her attempt to become Mayor of Roma, have been laboring to arrange a joint debate in which their candidate should take the platform and discuss the issues of our city campaign with that scion of would-be American Royalty, Jack Allingham. They have left no stone unturned to interest the public in this expected clash of argument and trial of brain-power. (We refrain from commenting here upon the minimum quantity of the latter necessary to such a debate.) Finally they had, with great flourish of trumpets and beating of drums—(we are speaking politically, not literally now)—arranged for such a debate on the very evening before election day.

"Last night Brocklebank Hall was crowded with the usual audience of mixed social position and nationality in attendance at mass-meetings of the Republican and Independent parties in Roma. They had gathered to hear the accumulated perorations of wit and wisdom on the part of their two candidates. They were to decide, finally, which one to vote for today; to make up their little minds whether to put into the mayor's chair a stiff, conservative aristocrat who cares no more for the laboring classes of Roma than he does for its work-horses—(or its mules) or a young woman of good ancestry, but no actual knowledge of municipal affairs—only an inherited cock-sureness of opinion on any and every subject that may come up.

"Did they hear this great joint debate?

"No. Why? Because during the hours

while the impatient audience were beguiled by feeble arguments from mushroom speakers, who attempted to amuse them while they waited, the principal actors in this farce were miles away, chasing each other about in electric cabs, which at a distance of twenty miles or more from Brocklebank Hall collided and threw the aspiring occupants out in a deep wood. Thus doth fate pursue the overambitious and wreck their plans.

"When the chauffeurs returned from the farmhouse whence they had gone for help in extricating their machines, Allingham, the aristocrat, lay prone on the ground with his head in the lap of her who had been his whilom opponent for the mayor's chair. A sight fit for the gods, truly—and also for the voters of Roma.

"The couple, erstwhile at swords' points, but now tucked cosily together in

one electric cab, were later brought back to Roma at one o'clock in the morning—she none the worse for her skillful evasion of the platform contest, and he with a slight scalp wound only, to show that he had been worsted.

"It remains now for the voters of Roma to consider whether such candidates as these are to be considered fit to be trusted with the affairs of our enterprising young city—and to vote accordingly."

CHAPTER IX

Election Day

ELECTION DAY dawned bright and clear and all Roma was up early, actively interested for once in the outcome of the day's work. The polling places were lively at seven o'clock and from that hour they grew more and more crowded, as men and women of all parties swarmed to deposit their ballots according to the Australian system. Never before in the history of the town had so many voters been out on the day of a municipal election.

The women had opened coffee-rooms for the day close by all the important voting booths, and wives and daughters

of the most prominent men in town served the steaming beverage by turns throughout the election hours free to all who might come. Moreover, they saw to it that no voter who mustered under the City Reform Club banner, was neglected. It would be too much to assume that the liquor stands were outdone, but at least the "Progressive Workers" were the means of sending many men home sober that day, and of rescuing a few of the tempted ones.

The leaders of the different parties were here, there and everywhere, looking after the interests of their respective candidates, talking, persuading, urging or buying the dilatory or vacillating vote. And the women found, early in the day, that in order to compete with the opposition, they must stay close to the polls.

"What shall we do? How divide our forces?" they asked.

Bailey Armstrong had just dropped into the coffee-room in the principal ward.

"Well, something, and at once," he said. "Sam Watts is everywhere, guiding his committees and buying up votes. Morgan and Jack Allingham, too, are getting down to business."

"Then Mr. Allingham is able to be out?" inquired Gertrude, at Bailey's side.

"He is out, able or unable," returned Bailey. "And they are leaving no stone unturned to get votes. I guess you'll have to come and turn a few cobblestones yourself—"

"Yes, Gertrude," said Mrs. Bateman, "you'll have to. I'll go the rounds with you."

"Mrs. Stillman and I will go over to ward seven," said Mrs. Jewett. "Mrs. Mason and Mrs. Turner to ward three, and Mrs. Wentworth and Grace Tolman

to ward two. And we'll get out some others. You couldn't go, could you, Miss Snow?"

"I am writing up the woman's part of today's battle," returned Mary Snow. "I shall go to every ward, and will help what I can,—but I cannot neglect my paper. *The Atlas* is going to give us all the space we can fill tonight."

"*The Atlas* has been good to us all through," said Gertrude. "We have one paper—and a decent one—we can depend upon."

It was arranged that the women should divide themselves into committees of two at each voting booth, these couples to shift every hour or two, so that Gertrude Van Deusen might be seen at every booth.

"One would think I had been on view long enough so that every man, woman and child should be familiar with my features by this time," she laughed, remem-

bering her constant appearance on the platform during the campaign. "Yet they are saying in some of the lower wards, that the voters have never laid eyes on me. Well, they shall have the chance."

Had it not been that the love of battle and of conquest had been born and bred in the old Senator's daughter, Gertrude would have sickened already of politics and politicians and the mass of feeble humanity that was like clay in the hands of the potter. For in spite of the real interest of the more intelligent citizens, there were the usual hangers-on and heelers,—men who had no civic sense, no idea of public duty, no moral stamina; men who sold their votes openly and as a matter of course.

"What'll you women give me?" asked one of these derelicts of Mrs. Bateman. "Burke's crowd has given me two dollars.

If you'll make it three, I'll vote for your candidate."

"We are not buying votes, sir," replied the Judge's wife. "We have no respect for a man who will sell his vote. But we will give you, in return for yours, the satisfaction of feeling that you are a man among men; that you are doing the right and honorable thing, and that you are helping to establish an honest government here in Roma. Isn't your manhood worth more than two or even three dollars to you?"

"Well," returned the man after a speechless moment, "I'll be dinged if it isn't! I am going to vote for you, anyhow." Which he proceeded to do, although in somewhat maudlin fashion.

At ward three, Miss Van Deusen came face to face with John Allingham. It was an awkward moment for both. Gertrude flushed, but she carried her head

high, and said "Good morning," with so much cordiality that Allingham felt more awkward than ever.

All night he had slept but fitfully, and in his wakeful hours had regretted with self-denunciation, that his name was to be voted upon that day. In his waking dreams he had thought once of withdrawing his candidacy, even at the polls. When he slept, he was riding once more, through the beautiful night—not alone, locked into the cab—but with Gertrude Van Deusen beside him, talking in her sweet musical voice, of things far removed from Roma and its dirty politics. The mobile face, the starry eyes, the delicate perfume that enwrapped her, lingered with him, and when he waked, it was difficult to cast the memory aside and to gather his wits for the fight which he must make against her that day, for an office he did not want;—but on the other

hand, more than ever did he want her not to have it. That beautiful and gracious young woman he told himself, endowed with rare graces of mind and soul,—she must not be allowed to soil herself with the political machinery at City Hall. She had been misguided, led into this candidacy by those other women, strong-minded suffragists. Was it not his duty to get out and work for her defeat?

And so he arose and dressed, and although hotly opposed by his women-folk, who thought he should stay in bed and be carefully nursed for a week, he went forth, his face adorned with surgeon's plaster and his heart full of mixed motives, to the fray.

"You are none the worse for your ride?" he said to her. "You are sure you were not hurt?"

"No, not a bit," laughed Gertrude. "There isn't even the odor of liniment

about me. But you,—your hurts must pain you? You were badly used up last night. Ought you to be out?" And then she blushed, remembering he was out to defeat her.

"Oh, I am well again," he returned, "only these bits of plaster make me out worse than I am. As soon as this election is over I'm going to find out who was at the bottom of that devilish plot."

"You'll never find out," said Bailey Armstrong, coming up at that moment. "It was some of Burke's dirty work, but they've covered their tracks mighty well. I've been making inquiries this morning. There isn't an electric cab in this city."

"Then they came over from Bonborough—or Plattsville," said Allingham. "There are plenty of them there."

"Yes, many," returned Armstrong. "But we shall never learn the truth. The trick was done so well that the perpetra-

tors know how to cover their tracks."

But a bevy of voters coming in, the conversation ended and Gertrude did not see her opponent again that day.

At six o'clock that evening, she lay on the couch in her own room, weary with the day's experiences. For all she had considered herself well posted in political methods, this day had been a revelation to her.

"Well, Jessica," she told her cousin, "I suppose we shall know before we go to bed how I stand. But at this moment, after all I've seen today and realizing the state our city affairs are in, I will own to you in confidence that I hope—honestly and earnestly,—that I am defeated. John Allingham may have the mayor's chair and welcome. I've seen enough of it already, and I tell you I am sick at heart."

"And what if it is Barnaby Burke who comes off victorious?" asked her cousin.

"Well, I am not sufficiently discouraged to be willing to have that happen," said Gertrude. "Still—between you and me,—I don't 'want the job,' as I heard one man express it today. But, even if I lose the election, it will always be a comfort to me to remember how the working-people came out for me,—as well as to know just who, among my father's old friends, can be reckoned as mine. And now, I want a little nap before dinner."

Down at the headquarters of the City Reform Club Judge Bateman and his colleagues awaited the result of the count. With them were many of the "Progressive Workers," eager for news. The Union Club, the hotels and Burke's headquarters were crowded, while John Allingham and his trusted lieutenants were gathered at the Municipal League rooms. Returns came in slowly and the crowds on the street clamored for news faster

than the bulletins could be given out.

At ten o'clock John Allingham was obliged to retreat and go home, physically worn out. The accident of the previous evening, combined with the excitement of the day, had proved too much for him. He was already in bed when the final returns reached him by telephone. Then he shut and locked his door, refusing to speak to another soul that night,—not even to his mother when she came up to see if he had taken the doctor's medicine.

Gertrude Van Deusen, too, remained in her room alone. Face to face with the decisive moment of victory or defeat, she could not see anyone. She was too tired to care much whether she had won or lost, although she recalled now, as a hopeful augury, that she had never yet been defeated for any office for which she had run in the various women's societies to which she belonged.

"Let John Allingham have the place, if he can get it," she was saying to herself for the fiftieth time, as the mantel clock chimed out the half-past ten. "I am swept under by a queer psychological wave of repulsion. I hope I shall lose."

But she was aroused just then by the sound of women's voices on the stairs,—laughing and chattering,—and she felt the note of triumph ringing through her brain as they came up to her door.

"Hurrah for Roma's Woman Mayor!" cried the first one to enter. "Here's to Her Honor the Mayor."

At the same moment John Allingham and Barnaby Burke were saying to themselves with a choice of words befitting their habitual language:

"Defeated! and by a Woman!"

And Burke added:

"I wonder now, just what happened in that cab last night. That was a mistake."

CHAPTER X

The New Mayor's Policy

THE story of the kidnaping spread through the city like wildfire, and surmounted in interest even the result of the election. As usual in such cases, the facts were exaggerated and speculation ran rife as to the principals in the plot. Some people (the more sensible) thought the Burke forces had planned and executed the whole coup, but others believed that it originated with Sam Watt's party and that Armstrong, getting wind of the carrying away of Gertrude Van Deusen, speedily turned the tables on Allingham by hiring another cab and seizing upon him as he was leaving his house alone, to

walk down town to the public debate. It leaked out, too, that there were two men with the cab which carried John Allingham, lest,—the people said,—he should try to break the plate glass front and jump from his moving prison. But that the plot was a well-matured one was proven by the fact that outside locks had been placed on the doors to both cabs, so that they could not be forced open from the inside.

No definite clue, however, could be obtained to the perpetrators of the kidnaping scheme, although both sufferers from it had put private detectives at work upon the affair. But, like many startling public events, the midnight ride of the two candidates was a "nine days' wonder" and then the public interest centered around the newly elected mayor.

Gertrude had need not only of public sympathy, but of all the courage and

clear-sightedness which she had inherited. This she realized more fully than ever, when the excitement of campaigning was over. If she had chosen to spend her time and strength and money on automobiles or fine clothes, people would have passed upon her choice as the natural thing, and envied her way of living; but now that she had elected to work hard and to give herself freely to fighting for principle and establishing good government in her city, her friends of different tastes whispered among themselves, "How strange!" "How unwomanly!" "How unnatural for a woman!"

"The only motives many people can understand," said Gertrude one day to her cousin, "are the ones by which they themselves are actuated. And not always then. My rich friends may not be able to understand, but the plain people will; the ones who are capable of conviction

and of sacrifices for conviction will."

"All the same, Gertie," retorted her cousin, "this world is not made up of Savonarolas nor other burn-at-the-stake folks. You are in a bad scrape and I wish you had had sense enough to say no when those women dragged you forth," which only went to prove the axiom that one's relatives are privileged of speech.

But the new mayor paid no attention to her cousin and went on calmly planning for the future of Roma, visiting its various institutions and getting as thorough an insight into its public administration as possible before taking her place in the mayor's chair. She visited the schools, the hospitals, the police stations, the jail. She was overwhelmed with the magnitude of what she had undertaken, but already dreamed of a new and beautiful development of the city. She consulted with the leading business men,—judges, lawyers,

and the clergy. She began to evolve ideas of her own and thanked Heaven every night that she had been endowed with courage and will-power sufficient to keep her from turning back from her municipal plough in a panic,—courage enough to keep her head high and her aim straight in the path that lay in front of her. She began to draw near the people, to feel a personal interest in them, to realize the great brotherhood of humanity, and to wonder how best she might hope to apply the highest social ideals to the everyday life of her city. Did any man ever take possession of the mayoral chair with purer hopes or more worthy ambitions?

In the meantime every mail brought her letters more or less congratulatory in tone. Some predicted a glorious career ahead for her; some half concealed their disbelief in her ability to fulfill the duties she was to assume; some openly warned

her of the perils of weakness and demagogue government, or advised her against the institution of radical reforms.

Socially, she was more in demand than before. Dinners and receptions demanded her presence as chief guest, while her newly acquired gift of speech-making was called into requisition on all sorts of occasions. But the finest social affair of all was the dinner given in her honor by the "Progressive Workers," on the night before her inauguration. To this were invited all the notable men and women of Roma, the mayors of the neighboring cities and the governor of the State, who really attended, supported by a galaxy of uniformed officers which lent brilliancy by their glittering stars and bars, if not by their wit and intellect.

Gertrude, arrayed in her finest Paris gown,—a white embroidered crepon with garniture of exquisite lace,—received the

guests at six o'clock, in line with the governor and the mayors of six other cities, together with Mrs. Bateman as president of the "P. W.'s", and Judge Bateman of the City Reform Club. John Allingham had been invited, too, to stand in line, as the head of the Municipal League, but until the last moment no answer was received from him.

Gertrude had not seen him since election day. He had been ill after the election was all over, and unable to go out for a fortnight; and although he had been strongly tempted to write a note of congratulation to the new mayor, he was kept back by pride—which in this case, it must be admitted, was another name for obstinacy. For this reason, he did not decide whether or no to attend the new mayor's reception until Bailey Armstrong descended upon him in the League rooms, two days before the date.

"Why don't you answer your bid for the reception to Miss Van Deusen, Jack?" he asked bluntly, as he seated himself in the chair nearest the chairman's private desk. "Can't you lay aside your prejudice long enough for that?"

"Well, what do you think?" replied Jack. "The League refused to endorse her, you know."

"Under you, yes," retorted Bailey with the frankness of an old friend. "But isn't it about time the League came around and did the square thing? You're putting the League in a bad light, Jack; really you are. I thought you had more sense. And, I tell you, Miss Van Deusen is going to give this town a waking up, such as will make you want to enlist under her banner—quick. Come, be decent, now."

"If you think it will be best for the League," began Allingham.

"Yes. It'll be better for the League—and best for you," said Bailey. "Hurry up now and write your acceptance, and then come."

It was late when he arrived, and the rooms were closely crowded with guests, so that he was hurried past the receiving party and left in his place in the line. He had just a formal greeting for Gertrude and at the dinner was seated where he could only note her beauty and brilliancy from afar. But the effect was John Allingham's first eye-opener in the development of the modern woman. Brought up as he had been, by a narrow jealous mother, kept close at his books, living at home, even during his college days, he had never before come under the direct influence of the women who are becoming an educative, progressive power in the world of today; and he began to wonder for the first time in his life, if a woman

might not be a strong force in public reforms and still retain her refinement of spirit and her home-loving, home-keeping qualities.

He recalled how lovely Gertrude Van Deusen used to look as a girl of eighteen, when he had seen her at public gatherings with her distinguished father. But here tonight, she was even more beautiful; her expression was sweeter and more confident; the fine lines of her figure suggested power, and also repose. She had the same rich color, the same lovely curves, the same joyous health; but she had, too, a wiser and a far finer face.

"And yet," he told himself, "all my study and travel and observation tells me a woman's natural position in society is in a safely guarded home; and the evil consequences of meddling with this position must show themselves, sooner or later. Humanity is of one general quality

everywhere,—and that not so high as she apparently believes. Changes in social ideals are more or less dangerous and indicate decadence, often, rather than advance. Yet the atmosphere tonight is charged with joyous triumph. Let us see what she is going to say."

For amidst deafening applause, the new mayor had begun to speak to the assemblage around her.

"I am not going to announce any definite line of policy," she was saying, "because, as yet, I have none. I shall take up the work as it comes to me and shall not forget that I am after all only the city's chiefest servant. But, there are many thoughts which I would share with you. There are many things I would have you be thinking over, that we may see alike, perhaps, in the future when our work develops,—for it is yours as much as mine, this work of making a better city.

Instead of accepting a written code of first principles in municipal ethics (and why not municipal ethics as well as moral and medical ethics?) let us learn to trace and connect, explain and apply, so as to make our accepted truths into a working principle. Every trade, every profession, has a basis of ethical knowledge; all conduct, public or private, has its ethics. Get the people to study the science of conduct, the development of the ideal into everyday life, and our public morality will rise and spread every year. We have separated too much those two closely allied things, religion and ethics. Let's try to bring them together right here in Roma. We can't reform the city in a year, —but we can begin. No religion is alive until—unless it works. We want no 'varnish religion,' as somebody called it; we want no ethics that won't strike in and uplift humanity as high as is humanly

possible. God is still busy in Roma. It is our business, as private citizens, as well as public officials, to take right hold and help. Let us all set ourselves to studying the ethics of city government. What have been our especial hindrances, and why? What can be done to improve matters, and how? What are our first and most crying needs, and who are our best men and women to help them? We are set here together to help on the good work. I'd rather see the people of Roma 'loving each other in dollars and cents' and reaching out to help, realizing the immeasurable happiness of living by giving themselves in service, than anything else in the world. We can all demonstrate the highest social relation, our highest duty to God, by doing things. Will you help?"

There were tears in the eyes of the other women present when she sat down,

—and a corresponding feeling in the hearts of many men, for she had stirred to the depths many a heart that only needed the path of duty pointed out, to desire to walk therein.

As for John Allingham, he sat spell-bound. A woman,—a young woman to talk like this? to dream of applying the doctrines of ethics to city politics? And in the City Hall of Roma? And yet,—why not?

When the exercises were over and the goodnights were being said, he went over to where she stood, shaking hands again with the departing guests and joyously receiving pledge after pledge of help from those whose assistance she most eagerly desired. He had to wait for some moments before his chance came. But finally he held out his hand and said with more cordiality than he had thought possible:

"I want to congratulate Roma upon its woman-mayor. I want to thank you for what you said tonight; and please count on me, from now on, to help in every possible way."

He was still young enough to thrill at the tone of her voice and the light in her eyes as she thanked him, and said, "I shall remember."

CHAPTER XI

At Work

HE new mayor's inauguration into office was an event which will go down in the history of Roma as witnessing the greatest crowd of citizens of both sexes in City Hall which that temple of the money-changers ever saw. Both the friends and the enemies of the new administration were out in full force, and Gertrude Van Deusen's speech, accepting her new responsibilities, found ready response in many a heart which was thrilled by her words for the first time that day. The women of Roma turned out en masse and the old City Hall was not spacious enough to shelter all that came.

But it was when she took actual possession of the handsomely appointed office of the mayor, that she realized fully she was face to face with the greatest problem of her life. For now she had access to the inner temple of the mysteries of city government. She had already provided against the sex-awkwardness of her situation by installing as private secretary, Mary Snow, of the Atlas.

"Don't tell me no," she had urged when she offered Mary the position. "I must have a broad-minded, capable woman there who has had experience and knowledge of affairs. I know of nothing that could give a woman this kind of insight into public matters, like newspaper work of the kind you have done."

"But there are other newspaper women," began Mary—

"Yes, I know there are," replied Gertrude Van Deusen. "But a woman must

have personal character and dignity and personal honor to fill this position, as well as the aforesaid experience."

And Mary Snow had accepted the place, to the joy of all other newspaper workers; for the gatherer of news is always rejoiced to find a newspaper man or woman ready to serve them when they are sent out for information by their chiefs. As the new mayor believed in publicity she soon had the sworn support of most of the newspaper men who came near City Hall. Her stenographer, too, was an attractive young woman and the feminine element soon became evident in all that part of the building devoted to the mayor's use. Flowers bloomed in the windows, an early and thorough house cleaning took place, and the cuspidors which had been conspicuous at every turn were banished,—all but the occasional one which must be left for the stranded poli-

tician who could not wait until he got out of doors. Signs were placed in various parts of the building, calling attention to the new waste-baskets, and prohibiting smoking and expectoration.

From time immemorial, City Hall had been a loafing place for seedy politicians, active and retired, who passed their time plotting for the next campaign in the free seats provided by the City Fathers. One morning these individuals found no chairs,—absolutely none except those used by the officials and clerical force. They called the janitor and expostulated volubly, but all to no effect.

"She's banished 'em, boys," he said. "It would be as much as my place is worth to bring 'em back. The boys say she ain't agoin' to have no heelers 'round here, nohow."

With this they had to be content—after they had grumbled long enough—to

go away and hunt up new quarters. For once, there was a City Hall with clean corridors, no tobacco smoke, and no loafers.

From the moment of her entrance into office, office-seekers and office-holders beset Gertrude Van Deusen until she began to doubt if there would be time left for the pursuance of any other duty in life than to appease them. She learned, quickly enough, to shunt these off on her private secretary; but while she did not propose to discharge good men, she found that there must be good counsellors at hand for her own safety. At the end of her first week she called for the resignation of the city solicitor, McAdoo, who was rather glad than otherwise to "cut loose from petticoat government," as he expressed it. His place she filled at once by giving Bailey Armstrong the position.

The Common Council was made up of

eighteen men, about half of whom were new to the position, so that it remained to be seen how far they could be depended upon to support any radical reform instituted by the new mayor; but as Geoffrey Mason and Albert Turner had finally consented to run on "the woman ticket" and had been elected, she felt that she might count on their influence, at least, and hoped to win over others. There were perhaps half a dozen, besides, on the "woman ticket"—every one of whom were men who would have declined to serve with any other mayor; but having pledged their word to "see her through" and been elected, they fulfilled their pledge now, like the staunch, good citizens they were. With this backing she felt that she might hope to carry out the work she had undertaken.

There were many things to harass her, however, chief among them being that the

board of aldermen were strongly against her, men of the old regime mostly, ready to fight against any radical reforms and to begin work already to defeat her most cherished plans.

"She's in for two years, worse luck," said one of them. "But we'll tie her hands so she can't do too much mischief. A mayor's only a mayor, after all," with which significant utterance he winked solemnly to the reporter who was interviewing him for the *Screamer*.

But the new mayor went serenely on with her new duties, and if she knew all these things, gave no sign; apparently, the machinery of municipal government was running on well-oiled wheels until even the most ardent of her supporters began to wonder when she was "going to get busy."

But she was busy. The new mayor had a constructive imagination and did not

fear big ideas. She dreamed already of a warfare against privilege—the privileges of the franchise corporations, the privileges of unjust taxation, and ultimately the privilege of private monopoly. Graft must be stamped out of the city administration, and a high order of men elected to the bench. Some big things must be accomplished in the city.

She had arrived at the conclusion that to most people the municipality is an industrial accident, its government rather a matter of police, fire and health administration, some public schools and a police court, a street and water department; that they wanted just enough of these things, and at the lowest possible cost, to enable men to go about their daily business.

"That," she said to herself, "is the average man's conception of the uses of a municipality. Some day we shall look back upon such an idea of a city as we

now look back upon the straggling tepees of an Indian village. The city of tomorrow will be a people's city, doing countless things, all for the welfare of the people."

"And you expect to put that idea into practice here?" asked Mary Snow somewhat incredulously, as they sat at lunch together after a morning of hard work. "You expect Roma to stand for all that!"

"Her Honor" smiled back across the table. "Yes," she said, "I expect to start things in that direction, and to create such a public interest that my successor will be chosen especially to carry on the work that I mean to begin. I know of one city which already views these things as a necessary part of a good city's administration. It is not content with doing as few things as possible; it does as many things as possible for its people. Its public bath-houses give hundreds of thou-

sands of baths every year. They are equipped with gymnasiums, where public instructors teach the children. Thousands of families are entertained free of cost by the baseball games played upon the public diamonds scattered all over the city. A number of city leagues have been organized, composed of clerks and workingmen. In the winter, skating carnivals are held and two score artificial skating ponds are maintained. The children are invited to the parks for May-day and romping-day festivals. All of these things not only enlarge the life of the people, but also identify them with the city in a way that was not dreamed of a few years ago. By following these lines, Roma may be a people's city, a city that serves, that brings happiness to thousands whose life is otherwise encompassed with the dreary drudgery of toil."

"If you could bring such an ideal state

of things to pass," said Mary Snow, "Roma would call you blessed among women. And you would never be allowed to stop being mayor."

"Well," returned Gertrude, "the best way to fight the saloon is to offer a substitute greater in interest. In my ideal city not only will there be plenty of free baseball diamonds, but also golf links and tennis courts, to invite thousands of people into the city's pleasure resorts. A dozen playgrounds will be laid out in the congested districts. Here trained men will teach the children of the poor how to play. These children will be taken from the street. They will be saved from the reformatory. They will be given good bodies to live in. In this way the work of the police department will be diminished, for one playground is the equivalent of several patrolmen. And it does not cost one-quarter as much. Who

knows but our Roma of tomorrow will do these things on a grander scale than any of our cities have yet attempted? It will rival the saloon and bring opportunities for recreation and happiness within easy access of the poorest man's home."

But Mary Snow did not answer. She had caught Bailey Armstrong's smile as he passed down the room, and even the ideal city faded into insignificance as a warm thrill called the color into her cheeks, and made Gertrude say as she glanced up at her:

"How pretty you look, Mary. I wouldn't suppose you were a day over eighteen."

CHAPTER XII

Skirmishing

HEN Gertrude returned to her office a man sat waiting for her, a big, burly looking man with an evil-looking eye.

"I want to talk with you alone," he said when she had taken her seat. "Can't you send the others out?"

She was surprised at the request and started to say that her private secretary must be present at all interviews; when she thought better of it and motioned the stenographer and Miss Snow to go out.

"Now we can talk business," said the man, drawing his chair up closer. "See here, my name is McAlister. I've the contract for laying out the avenue

from Hayden Park to the Boulevard."

"And you are doing the work?" asked Gertrude.

"Yes, I'm doing the work all right," returned McAlister. "But this smart Alec you have in the law department may make trouble—and expense for the city," he added.

"Just how, Mr. McAlister?" asked Gertrude so smoothly as to cause the big contractor to take fresh courage.

"Well, you know when a lawyer is put into a public position—city solicitor or district attorney, or whatever—the first thing he does is to look for something that he can rip up the back."

"And what is the matter with your contract?" Her tones were dulcet now.

"Nothing at all. My contract is all right," replied the man. "But Armstrong is putting up a bluff and threatens to have it overhauled."

"But why?" persisted the mayor.

"Now look here, your Honor," urged the man confidentially. "Your father was a politician. He knew all the tricks of the trade. He made his pile all right, one way or another."

"Mr. McAlister!" Gertrude's voice had a new note.

"O, hold yourself close, now," said he. "No harm meant. Senator Van Deusen was as fine a man as Roma ever produced. And if I didn't vote for you—it wasn't because I wouldn't do anything for his daughter. But now,—well, let's make it a mutual thing. You protect me and my interests and I'll stick by you, and where I go, there go several hundred other good voters."

"The scoundrel!" said Gertrude to her inmost soul. But she did not change countenance.

"Well, I will look into the matter," she

replied. "If your contract is all right—and you say it is—the city will certainly stand by you. Of course I could not promise anything more definite than that now. But I will look into the matter and advise Mr. Armstrong."

"O, don't take your time to look up a contract a year old," said McAlister. "It won't be worth your while. Take my word,—the word of one who worked night and day for your father,—and just call Armstrong off. He'll find enough in the bridge department to keep him busy, if he must stir things up anywhere."

"I will speak to Mr. Armstrong," said Gertrude, rising and pushing the electric button as a signal for the others to return. There was nothing for McAlister to do but depart, wondering just how much he had gained by the interview.

"If she goes to looking into old contracts—" he muttered as he went down

the stairs—and then whistled sharply.

When he was well out of sight, Gertrude sent for Bailey Armstrong.

"What are you doing to one McAlister?" she asked. "A street contractor, I believe he is."

"Nothing, as yet. Why?" asked the city attorney.

"Well, he's just left me," replied the mayor. "Says you are going to 'rip his contract up the back,'—to quote him literally."

"Aha!" said Bailey. "Then he's afraid, is he? I've done nothing as yet, but I heard something the other day that caused me to suspect trouble in that direction. See here, Gertie, just how far do you want me to go in this 'ripping-up-the-back' business? I'm positive if we once begin we'll find graft on every side of us. Then trouble will begin, you know,—trouble for you, I mean."

"Never mind me," she answered. "What am I here for if it is not to purify city government? I don't expect to make friends in the process; but if I can serve the city—and thereby my state and my country, why,—" She stopped and looked fearlessly at Armstrong.

"Then I shall go ahead—looking into the matter of contracts and appropriations?" he asked.

"Certainly," she replied. "No matter whom it hits, investigate every department of the administration."

"Bravo!" said he. "You're a chip of the old block all right." Gertrude remembered with a twinge of apprehension what McAlister had said about her father's "pile." "But you must be prepared for war — underhanded, tricky, politicians' war," added Bailey.

A week later he appeared again at her office and asked for a private interview.

"Gertrude," he began, "it's as I feared about McAlister. He has an infamous contract—or, rather, a whole set of them —and he is fleecing the city with every yard of pavement he puts down."

"That doesn't surprise me," replied the Mayor. "It's the scared bird that flutters."

"He has a separate contract for every 300 square yards of pavement he lays," said Armstrong. "Instead of accepting the terms of the lowest bidder, the board of aldermen let him these contracts. It is a wrong system from the start. We ought to have a competitive system and award our contracts to the lowest bidder who will do good work. Instead of that, there seems to have been some sort of chicanery by which McAlister was given all these little contracts,—on every one of which he makes a big profit,—while the other bidders were not even considered."

"Who has the giving out of contracts, anyway? Oughtn't there to be a regular system about it?"

"There should be a law about it," said Bailey. "But I find nothing in the city charter. And I find that contracts have been given out by aldermen, councilmen or mayor, just as happened to suit their notions best."

"Suppose you go to work, Bailey, and draft me a bill providing that every piece of work to be done for the city shall be open to all bidders. We must have some definite plans of considering and acting on these bids—so that none of the officials can give out contracts without such action and vote as the whole council and the mayor think best. Better make it obligatory that the bids be opened in the presence of all who may wish to be present and in the presence of, or by, the mayor. That would be something I'd like to es-

tablish in my term—something to be remembered."

"Not only that," said Armstrong, "but no contract should be considered binding on the city without the mayor's signature of approval."

"Go ahead and draw it up," said the Mayor. "And then we'll have a meeting of the Common Council and get it adopted."

But while it was easy enough to draw up and elaborate the bill, it was not so simple a matter to get it passed. A meeting was called and every one of the Common Council came. Then Gertrude began to count her strength, and to find that a man's pocketbook is next to his heart in more senses than one.

It was a stormy meeting—this first one over which the woman-mayor presided. Mason and Turner and several others of the new members of the city council

worked ably to get the proposed amendment to the charter through; but every alderman and a majority of the Council were against it. The debate was hot and turbulent. Several times the mayor had to bring down her gavel sharply, and call to order men much older and better versed in parliamentary tactics than herself. And when it was all over, the assembly had voted to lay the whole matter on the table!

"It all comes to just this, I am afraid," said Gertrude to Armstrong and Mary Snow when it was all over and they were back in the mayor's office. "They all fear exposure of one kind or another. How much do you suppose they want to conceal?"

"There is nothing hid which cannot be found out," retorted Bailey, "and by the great horn spoon, I'll find it out."

"They may wish they had voted 'yes'

before they get through with this," said Mary Snow. "For they must know that you have access to every sort of record in the city, if you choose."

"And I choose," responded Miss Van Deusen. "I'll go through every contract, now we're started. That reminds me, Bailey, McAlister hinted that you could find plenty to do in the bridge department, if you must 'rip things up the back'. I would look into that, too, if I were you."

"Yes—and this new franchise the street railway is so nearly concluding," he answered. "O, we'll be enough for them yet. When are you going to appoint a new street commissioner? Perhaps that might precipitate things a little."

"Tomorrow, then, I'll ask for Thalberg's resignation," was the reply. "How would John Allingham do for that place?

I've been thinking it might be a good thing all around."

"Splendid," cried Bailey. "He'd like it, too. He likes a good fight—always did."

"Would he, do you think? Under a woman-mayor?" she added.

"I think so. It's different now you are elected, you know. Ever notice how much easier it is to support an innovation after it is well started than before?"

"Then come, Minnie," she said, turning to the stenographer. "Take this to Mr. Thalberg;" and she proceeded to dictate a letter advising him that his resignation, taking effect immediately, would be acceptable to the mayor.

Then she dictated another as follows:

Mr. John Allingham,

Municipal League Rooms; City.

Dear Mr. Allingham:

Will you do me the favor to call at

this office Thursday, the seventeenth, at ten a. m., and oblige,

Gertrude Van Deusen,
Mayor of Roma.

Which, when Allingham opened and read it late that afternoon, caused him to give vent to a long, low whistle, and to read it over the second time.

But he wrote, immediately, accepting the appointment; and a dozen times that night he asked himself what she could want of him—and just how much he would be willing to help the woman-mayor.

Then, looking out across the moonlit city from his tower window, he recalled that other night when they rode together in the open country beneath the shining moon—when she was not the candidate, the mayor-elect, the modern strenuous woman—but just a sweet and gracious spirit with a melodious voice and

a presence that thrilled him. Then he told himself, "Yes, anything—anything she wants."

And Gertrude, in the silence of her own room, was saying to herself, "Will he come, I wonder? Would I, if I were in his place? If I were a man who had been brought up to believe as he does about women; and then a modern suffragist who had won out over me, had sent for me,—to ask me to come and help—would I go? Oh, how do I know?"

CHAPTER XIII

An Important Appointment

HEN John Allingham arrived at City Hall Thursday morning he was first of all impressed with the changed interior of the place,—the absence of loafers, the clean corridors, the blossoming plants. Neither could he help seeing that in place of the old spirit of listlessness in the various departments, everyone seemed busy and interested. "If this is what women can do in politics," he began to say to himself, —but the idea of incongruity was so deeply fixed in his mind that he at once supplemented his unfinished sentence,— "but they have no business here, just the same. It is no place for women."

He displayed none of the sense of awkwardness he felt, however, when he entered the Mayor's office and bade her good-morning.

"You wanted to see me?" he asked, taking the seat close to her desk.

"I sent for you," returned Miss Van Deusen, "because I am in special need of good, reliable men. Mr. Armstrong thinks you might be willing to help us in the struggle to get our city government on the right basis."

"I have already told you, I think," answered Allingham, with a slight sense of reserve, "that you can depend upon me."

"Yes, I know," said the Mayor; "I am proving it by now offering you the position of street commissioner. Will you take it?"

Allingham was distinctly taken by surprise. He had not expected—had he deserved?—a prominent place in the city

government. He was not sure that he wanted it.

"Perhaps you would like a day to consider the proposition," she went on, divining his hesitation. "And won't you talk with Mr. Armstrong about it? He knows as well as anybody what the work of the street department is going to involve. Can you think this over and let me know tomorrow?"

"I thank you for the honor you do me, anyway," answered he, rising to go, "and I will talk with Mr. Armstrong as you suggest. Of course you know, Miss Van Deusen, we all want to uphold your work, now."

"Yes, yes, I believe so," she returned seriously. "And, Mr. Allingham, it is because I want some thorough work done in the street department—by a fearless, trustworthy official, that I sent for you."

"Thank you," said Allingham—and

went down stairs in a tumult. Had he a right to such treatment? Had he not done everything in his power to prevent her election? Had he not used pen and tongue in all bitterness against her? And here she was, offering him one of the "plums" of the municipal pudding, just as if he had been her devoted henchman. But stay,—was she doing this to win him over, to make him come out before the public as her supporter? What would people say?

No. He would go over to his office and write a letter, declining the offer. A very polite letter it should be, acknowledging her distinguished kindness in offering him so responsible a post on her corps of working officials; but his private affairs—his law practice, the work of the Municipal League, his health, all combined to make it impossible for him to accept a position which would entail so

great an obligation to the city—and to her. Yes, to her! That was it, he knew.

And yet—to her? Why not? How capable and strong and self-reliant she had looked that morning in the mayor's chair. How different from any other women he had ever seen! What must she have been made of—this woman who had been the social equal of the best people in Washington, that she could lay aside for the moment all social preferences, all refined and educated tastes, to become mayor of such a city as Roma?—to sit there in the temple of the money-changers and try to wrestle with its problems. Bah! he had no taste for such modern women, or for such—

But he had promised to do everything he could to help her,—and to see Armstrong. Pshaw! He would go back and have it out with Bailey.

He turned and climbed the stairs to the

city solicitor's office. Armstrong welcomed him with a cordial bluffing way the two always used towards each other.

"About time you came," began Bailey. "Here I am occupying one of the seats of the high and mighty, and you make off as if I were nobody. I've a mind to take it out of you somehow."

"If you dared," returned Allingham. "But you can't. You've a character to maintain and I'm a guest. I say—was it you who put it into Miss Van Deusen's head that I'd take any little plum she chose to offer me? Because I won't, you know."

"O, yes, you will," said Bailey, "when it's *pro bono publico*. And say, if you've any civic pride whatever—if you want to discover graft in its most rampageous form and help to suppress or expose it—here's your chance. And you a boasted 'Municipal Reformer!'"

"What do you mean?" asked Allingham.

"Well, just this. One of Burke's contractors came into the Mayor's office the other day and complained that I was about to 'rip his contracts up the back,' —at least, that's the classic language in which he chose to present his ideas to a lady. I hadn't begun to look into these matters at all; but what he said led Miss Van Deusen to send for me and we have since been looking him up. I find that he is paving several streets—or will do so —on no end of little contracts of three hundred yards for each. He makes a nice fat sum on each,—an aggregate of several thousand dollars, I won't undertake to say how much. That sets us to thinking and investigating some more. Say, Jack, remember the franchise the Boulevard Railway asked for and almost got last year? It's still pending, you know.

Well, I've reason to think the Mayor was in on it—and Burke—for no end of boodle. That's why he wanted to be mayor. So you see, 'there's a reason' why a man like you should be willing to take the job of street commissioner this year. It will be no 'plum' this time, I can assure you. It looks now, as if it would be a fight instead—and perhaps a good hot one."

"That puts a different look to it," said Jack. "You know I'm not afraid of a fight—a good one."

"Don't I know it?" retorted Bailey. "Haven't I gone to bed sore and stiff, too many times, as a boy, to forget it? It's because you are a fair fighter and not a boodler that we want you at the head of the street department now. Come, Jack, will you do it?"

"You can be sure of it, Bailey," returned Allingham. "I'll accept at once. Tell me more of what you are finding

out. That is, if you think she won't mind."

"She won't mind your knowing some of it anyhow, because you'll be expected to help us look into certain matters," said Bailey.

They talked together for an hour or so, and when John Allingham finally departed he felt a deeper interest in city reform than ever, and believed the time had come when he could be of real use to his community.

"By the way, Jack," said Armstrong, as he was leaving, "have you found out anything more about the originators of your strange ride the night before election?"

"I have detectives working on it now —or pretending to," replied Jack, "but they don't seem to get anywhere. Whoever was behind the scheme covered his tracks well."

"Yes, we, too, have had a detective working," said Bailey, "though Miss Van Deusen has called him off now. No use, she says, and thinks perhaps any further work in that direction may hinder what she wants to do in another."

"Perhaps she's right," responded Allingham. "All we have been able to discover is that two electric cabs, both provided with outside means of locking the doors and windows, took the opposing candidates and went off twenty miles or so into the country, on the night before election, breaking up an important debate that might have turned the current of affairs in another direction—"

"—Um, perhaps," interrupted Bailey. "Perhaps not. Anyway, all this we knew before midnight, the evening it happened."

"Yes. And while there are no electric cabs in Roma, there are plenty of them

within a radius of twenty-five miles of us. And the Burke gang could easily have brought any of them here. I've been having a hunt made for cabs with outside locks; but so far, none have been discovered. Between you and me, I doubt if we can ever find out."

"Between you and me, I shall not be surprised if we run up against further deviltry of that sort," said Bailey, "before we get through with—"

The telephone interrupted him, and after a short one-sided conversation, Bailey arose, too.

"I'll go along with you," he said. "Miss Van Deusen wants to see me."

CHAPTER XIV

Graft

TWO weeks later, the fluffy little member of the Progressive Workers presented herself one morning at the rooms of the Mayor and requested a private interview. Probably she was the last woman in Roma one would have suspected of wanting to take a hand in politics. Yet, here she was.

"Why, Bella, is it you?" asked Gertrude. "What is it? Don't they keep your street clean? or empty your ash can often enough?"

"Well, I hope I should know enough, Gertrude Van Deusen," retorted the fluffy lady, "to go to the street-cleaning

department about that. No, I've something really important to tell you."

"Indeed. You may close the door after you, Minnie," she said to the stenographer. "Now, what is it, Bella?" For the life of her, she could not help using the same tone she would have used to a pretty child who had dropped in to complain of her teacher.

"Well, Mary Flynn,—that's my laundress, you know,—has overworked lately, and to keep up her strength, I'm sorry to say, has indulged in her habit of toning up for her day's work with more of the 'crathur' than is good for —, By the way, when are you going to tackle the saloons, Gertie?" She did not wait for an answer, but rattled on. "And so, you know, she gets rather talkative. Yesterday she was about half-seas over and talked every minute, and when I went down stairs to show her about my new

lingerie waists—well, you should have heard her!"

"Entertaining, no doubt," said Gertrude, wondering why she should have come here to take up her time with these purely domestic affairs.

" 'Faith, an' a woman for mayor is it, we do be havin'. An' a fine muss she'll be in ef she kapes on, indade and indade! McAlister's foreman was a tellin' av us last night, he was, that they'll soon be losin' their job. He says, says he, she's again' an honest man makin' a livin', she is. Why, there's me own naice's husband, Tim Mathews, ain't he an ahlderman, rayspicted an' looked up to? Ain't he layin' by a tidy little fortin' for Mary, just by aldermannin', when he's dead an' gone?' 'How is that, Mary?' I asked. 'He doesn't get much of a salary as alderman, does he? How can he support his six children and lay up a fortune?' 'Oh,

well, ma'am, it ain't the salary as does it,' returned the woman. 'It's the plooms; ef it wasn't for the plooms, he couldn't afford to lave his groceryin' an' his little corner saloon. But it's the plooms as make it worth while, he says.' 'What do you mean by "plums," Mary,' I asked, 'perquisites?' 'Why, ma'am, them that wants railroads an' saloons an' other privileges must pay the aldermin for thim. Why,' says she, 'would you believe it—Tim put a thousan' dollars in the bank in me naice's name the day he voted the franchise for the new street railroad, or that is—well, Mis,' did you say blue thim waists or not?' and not another word could I get out of her, although I quizzed her carefully as long as I dared to. I told Rudolph about it last night and he said, 'Aha!' and whistled; and then he told me to tell nobody else in the world, but you. So I've come. Rudolph will

support you. I always said so. He seems to think,—at least he said—'this may open up a pretty deep question for Miss Van Deusen.' "

"As indeed, it does," replied Gertrude, thoughtfully. "Tim Mathews, you said was the man?"

"Yes," said the fluffy lady, "but Rudolph said if that story was so, undoubtedly there are others."

"Undoubtedly," replied Gertrude. "Thank you, Bella, for coming to me. And you'll say nothing of this to anyone else?"

"O, no; and Rudolph thought it better that I should not be known in this. So you must promise, Gertie, not to let it be known that I told you. I might lose a very excellent laundress if you did."

Gertrude laughed. "What a very feminine point of view!" she said. "But you may have rendered the city a very good

service, and I heartily thank you."

When her visitor had gone Gertrude Van Deusen sat alone for some time. She had caught only at a straw,—but it might indicate which way a very strong wind had blown or might now be blowing. Was this the reason the board of aldermen were so opposed to her proposed bill? Evidently, there was need of a secret and courageous study of the situation. Corruption was in the very air; she had known it was there for a long time; but this was the first real evidence of it in definite shape. And yet,—the story might have been but the idle boast of a half-drunken washerwoman. What should she do? Send for Judge Bateman?—Bailey?—Allingham? Not yet. She would look into it herself a little more.

She sent for the city treasurer, who came in somewhat uncertain as to what this woman could want with him. But

he soon found out, for after perfunctory greetings, the Mayor put the case squarely before him.

"Mr. Hanaford, I would like to look into the matter of our expenses for the last year or two."

"Why, certainly, I will draw up the statement for you," he answered in some surprise.

"No. That is in all the reports, I suppose," she said; "I would prefer to look into the books myself. I can then take the time to study the situation and compare figures."

"But really, Miss Van Deusen,—your Honor—you do not mean to insinuate that you do not trust me?" The man's tone was aggrieved, almost rebellious.

"I insinuate nothing. I distrust nobody," she replied quietly. "But our charter gives the mayor access to all the books and accounts of the city at any time. I

wish to familiarize myself with the city records, financial as well as clerical."

"Very well," said Mr. Hanaford. "But this is—may I be excused for saying it? —unexpected." He was saying to himself, "And what we might expect from a woman, with no knowledge of business."

"Will you come to my office?" he added respectfully, reassured by the thought that because she was a woman, she could not grapple with the problems before her, except by special study in each department.

"It will be better for you to bring all the books to my office," she answered. "Please have them here tomorrow morning."

Mr. Hanaford had scarcely gone out of hearing when an unfamiliar name was announced, with the information that the man insisted on seeing the mayor.

"I have tried to make him tell what he

wants," said Mary Snow, "but apparently he wants nothing but you. He is a gentleman,—that is, he dresses and speaks like one."

"Send him in and stay near the telephone," said Gertrude. And a moment later a stranger entered,—a well-dressed, heavily mustached man of forty-five.

"Your Honor, the Mayor," he began. "I am proud to meet the first woman who sits in a mayor's chair in America." He waited for her to be seated and then drew up a chair close to her desk.

"Thank you. Let us hope I may not be the last," answered Gertrude.

"There will never be one that will grace the office more completely," returned the stranger gallantly. "Although, you will say that a mayor of either sex should not be chosen for graciousness alone."

"That is what I was about to say," said Gertrude. "But I am glad you recognize

that firmer qualities are necessary, Mr. — Pardon me, did you give me your name?"

"Perhaps not," was the suave reply. "I am Orlando Vickery. I represent the Boulevard Railway Co."

Gertrude mastered her astonishment. This elegant person, then, was the man who was accused of trying to push his franchise through City Hall, illegally.

"I called to talk over matters with you," he was saying. "I feel that if you were to understand our position exactly, what we hope to do for the public, what we intend to do for the development of the city, I might persuade you that our cause is a just one—that we are entitled to all we ask and that, really, we are making a most liberal arrangement for the city."

"I do not fully understand just what you want to do," admitted the mayor. "Won't you explain?"

He did so at considerable length, en-

tering into a voluble account of the proposed railroad and its expected earnings, and detailing at some length the advantages to that part of Roma which the proposed line would open up.

"But you know, of course, that the citizens of that section of the city are opposed to having your railway go through it?" asked the Mayor when he finally stopped.

"But they are short-sighted, blind," urged the man. "Now look here," lowering his voice. "We want you with us. I am prepared to offer you a bonus of $10,000 the day you sign our franchise."

"Mr. Vickery!" cried Gertrude.

"Fifteen, then—twenty thousand," he urged, oblivious to the look on her face. "And, yes, I can make you a shareholder in the system,—and our Railway will be a winner, as I have shown you"—

"Mr. Vickery!" the Mayor rose to her

full height. "We may as well terminate this interview. I could not think of accepting anything of the sort. Understand, once for all, that I am not to be bought."

"Tut, tut, my dear lady," answered Vickery suavely, "I might have known better than to have presented my proposition to any woman—but you are an advanced woman, one who knows the ways of the world. I had presumed you knew something of the ways of politics."

"Mr. Vickery," said she, softening under a new idea; "tell me, is it customary for officials with whom you have had similar dealings to,—well, to be made shareholders in the concern?—And these little arrangements of which you speak.—should I be doing an unprecedented thing if I were to accede to your proposition?"

"Now you're talking like a sensible woman—a woman who has some idea of

running municipal affairs in a business way," the man replied. "While I do not wish to violate any confidences,—I may say you will not find yourself the first, nor the second official who is 'in it,' with the Boulevard Railway scheme."

"Well, Mr. Vickery, I want to think this over a little," said Gertrude. "I cannot decide today."

"Take all the time you want," replied the promoter, cheerfully. "Only, of course, the sooner we get this through, the better it will be for us all."

"I see," answered the Mayor. "And now, good morning, Mr. Vickery."

When she was alone again she sat back in her chair and stared hard at her desk for a good five minutes.

"I am beginning to see light," said she at last.

Meanwhile, Orlando Vickery was getting into his automobile and whirling

away down the street, chuckling to himself.

"Reformers are just like other folks," he told himself. "Catch 'em just as easy as a bird—only put a little salt on their tails, in the shape of good paying stocks, or a sufficient number of good hard, gold plunks."

CHANTER XV

Setting the Trap

HER next two days were given up to the study of the treasurer's books—and the financial system of government in Roma. The process necessitated looking up many details regarding salaries and other expenses, which took time and careful scrutiny on the part of both her and her office assistants. What the Mayor found out the first day led her to send for a trained accountant, whom she set quietly at work on the second morning. That night she sent for Armstrong to come to her house.

"I am beginning to realize what it means to a business man to have a good

home," she said to her cousin as she drew her pet easy chair up to the open fire in her library,—for although it was May the nights were chilly. "I never appreciated fully what it means to have a comfortable house well-kept;—to draw up after a hard day's work before one's own fire—to let the world go by while I 'take mine ease in mine inn.' I tell you, Jessie, if women all realized what this means, there would be more happy homes and fewer divorces."

"I suppose so," replied her cousin. "Yet there is something to be said on the other side. I get so tired of staying in the house all day, struggling with the problems of housekeeping and the vagaries of servants that I rather sympathize with the women who demand the company of their husbands at night, to the theaters and dinners and whatever social functions come handy."

"Wrong," said Gertrude sententiously. "When a man gets home at night, weary in body and mind with the grind of his business, he wants a good dinner, an easy chair, his newspaper or magazine, his pipe. I can understand how like heaven a woman can make his home—a woman with tact;—or how like the other place it might become with her discontented grumbling or her determination to get him into evening clothes and drag him into the outside world again,—to be harried and worried and kept uncomfortable for several hours more."

"But the wives—what are they going to do?" asked Miss Craig. "Are they never to have any outside pleasures?"

"With all the clubs and bridge-parties and afternoon teas, they have going in the day-time," said Gertrude, "let them be content. But at night, if she values domestic happiness, let the wife not dare

deprive her husband of the delights of a good well-kept home," and she snuggled closer into her big chair.

"Goodness, Gertie!" l a u g h e d her cousin. "One would think you contemplated a husband. Or are you getting up a speech on Public Life for Women as a Training for Matrimony. But here's Bailey. I suppose you want to talk over City Hall matters—the last thing I want to listen to. So you'll excuse me. But, do you think the ideal domestic menage would allow business after hours? O, Bailey, I suspect she'll be taking up cigarettes next;" and with that she went away to make a call at the nearest neighbor's.

"Sit down, Bailey," said Gertrude, reaching up to greet him. "I'm so comfortable—and lazy, here; I'm sure you won't mind if we just sit by this fire and talk things over. Well—do you know that Mr. Henry,—the accountant,—has

been going over the books today?"

"Probably a good thing," was Bailey's comment. "Find anything out of the way?"

"He thinks the salary bills, some of them, larger than they should be. O, there is so much to do! So many ways in which things should be improved!—so many ends to be looked after and gathered up," she cried.

"Not getting tired, Gertie—already?" asked Bailey, in a surprised tone.

Gertrude sat up straight in her chair. "There are two sides to me, Bailey," she answered. "I suppose there are two to most people. There is the Gertrude Van Deusen who has been shielded and cared for all her life, who has never known hardship or difficulty—or even work; and sometimes — as tonight here in the shelter of my father's fine library, she comes to the surface with her cry for lux-

ury and the easy sheltered path she has always known. But there is another Gertrude Van Deusen, who having laid her hand to the plough, would deem it a disgrace to turn back before her furrow is ploughed. She is the one who stands ready to face anything, to dare the city rogues, to root out corruption if it exists—and I think it does."

"Not much doubt of that," returned Bailey. "And good for you. You're the same girl I used to drive into a corner of the snow-fort, just to see you fight."

"Not very ladylike, was I?" smiled Gertrude. "But if I had been of the ladylike kind,—well, Roma would have had Burke in as mayor now. And Bailey, I believe Burke is deep in that Boulevard business. How shall we find out?"

They talked for a long time over the glowing coals; then Mary Snow came in and Jessie Craig again, and there was

music and a quiet game of whist, after which Bailey escorted Mary away with his most gallantly protective air.

"Gertrude, do you think Bailey is just a trifle interested there,—in Mary Snow, I mean?" asked Miss Craig when they had gone.

"Bailey? O, no," answered Gertrude. He had been devoted to her so many years, she felt an almost proprietary interest in him. She felt that she might have married Armstrong any time within the last ten years. "Bailey is always interested in people I like," she went on. "And I certainly do like Mary. I don't know what I could do without her. The work brings the two in close consultation often, you know." She did not see the lifting of Jessica's dainty eye-brows as she turned to say good-night. And it was well she did not see Bailey when he said good-bye to Mary a little later.

The next morning Vickery came to see her again.

"'Weren't expecting to see me so soon, perhaps?" he asked as he drew close to her desk. "But I thought I'd drop in and see what you've decided on,—or if you've decided on anything. How is it? Coming in with us?"

"There are still some points I want to question you about," said the Mayor. "Minnie, will you give us the room, free from interruption a few minutes? Thank you. Now, Mr. Vickery, will you go over your proposition again?"

The man did so, explaining the advantages and necessities of the desired franchise with many words. She asked an occasional question, cautiously and with apparent lack of intelligence, and even at the close of their talk he doubted if she understood half of what he had been saying.

"You want to remember," he concluded, "that we have good men behind the scheme. There is plenty of money, and we are prepared to put some of it where it will do the most good."

He waited significantly, but she did not seem to understand. What could be expected of a woman, in matters of this kind.

"As I said the other day, there will be a nice little slice of stock for you,—and $20,000 besides for you, or for your pet charity," he urged, to put the thing more plainly before her.

"But if we were to get found out?" she asked. "If it were to be known—might we not get into trouble?"

"Huh! no danger of that," laughed Vickery. "The aldermen are all in it—we can manage the common council—that is, if you come with us. And Armstrong will be sure to come in, if you do."

"Hadn't I better talk this over with the chairman of the board of aldermen?" asked Gertrude.

"You might," assented Vickery. "Still, —in matters of this kind, it is better to do as little talking as possible."

"But how am I to be sure they are in it?" The Mayor seemed to hesitate. "I do not want to do any unnecessary talking—but how do I know this is not all a trap, to catch me?"

"More astute than I gave her credit for being," said Vickery to himself. Then aloud:

"My dear lady!—but I realize your position—yes, and I respect it. If I give you proof, actual figures,—will you believe me then?"

"Yes, I'll believe you then," said Gertrude.

"Then suppose I come again this afternoon," urged the man. "I'll have the

memoranda of the figures with me."

"Very well. Come at three," answered Gertrude. "I will have the way clear by then."

And Vickery departed, well satisfied with his half-hour's work. But when he had gone, Gertrude sent for Mary Snow, and they had a long talk together.

At three, promptly as the clocks were chiming out the hour, Orlando Vickery presented himself, and was ushered into the Mayor's private office.

"Well, I'm here," he said. "We are alone, of course?" He walked over to a curtained doorway, and drew aside the draperies. The stenographer's office was disclosed—empty. He remembered having seen her in the outer office as he came through.

"Pardon me," he apologized. "I just wanted to make sure—for your own sake, of course. For while these little arrange-

ments are always being made, we prefer to have no witnesses, you know. Again, pardon me, but where does that door lead to?" He pointed towards the corner, just behind the desk.

"Only into a private closet," answered Gertrude. "You can look in if you insist upon it." But she quaked a little inwardly as she said it.

"O, no," answered Vickery. "I thought it might lead into one of the other offices. We don't want to be disturbed. Now, for business. Here's my private memorandum. Look it over. Anything you can't understand, just ask me."

Gertrude took the book—a small leather-covered memorandum — and began turning its leaves. But somehow she seemed dull of comprehension.

"What is this?" she asked. "'Paid in 1907,—Royalties.' What are royalties?"

"Well, I preferred to put them that way. I should put you, when we perfect our little transaction, under that head."

"O, I see," answered Gertrude. "Here is John O'Brien, $12,000; is that a royalty as you call it?—because he is pledged to the franchise?"

"That's what," answered Vickery. "He's already had that much. He was chairman last year, you know."

"And Mr. Mann,—our present chairman," asked Gertrude. "Is he here?"

"Later on you'll find him," was the reply.

Gertrude read on, in a low distinct voice, the various items, showing "royalties" paid various officials, running from $500 up to thousands, finally coming down to Mann's.

"Is this right—Otis R. Mann, $13,500?" she asked.

"That's right."

"And that means that Mr. Mann has already taken $13,500—and pledged himself to get the franchise through?" she asked in her low clear tone.

"That's what. All we need now is your signature and to go through the form of getting it passed through the council again, and we are all done," answered Vickery. "You have a queer charter in this town."

"And if I sign the proposed bill?" she asked.

"You get $20,000 cold cash and a thousand shares of preferred stock," urged Vickery.

"Why not give me a certified check right now?" asked the Mayor.

"Now if that isn't just like a woman!—a charming feminine trait, too." returned Vickery. "No man would think of asking for a check in these little transactions. Good, solid money is all right, isn't it?"

"I suppose so," she returned.

"Well?" he asked, after a slight pause.

"Well?" she returned.

"You're going to sign the bill?" he asked, wondering just what she would do next.

"Mr. Vickery,—it's against all my principles, you know,—taking money or its equivalent for my signature," said the Mayor.

"Oh,—I thought we had gone all over that," he retorted.

"Yes, I know. I haven't said I won't," she went on. "But I want just one day —or rather, one night more to think this over—I wonder what my father would do in my case."

"Your father was a good politician," answered Vickery confidently. "He would have known at once what to do."

"I believe he would," answered Gertrude in her most inscrutable manner.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take tonight—only just tonight, to settle this with my conscience—and I will see you in the morning—early, if you say so."

"I suppose I shall have to be satisfied with that," answered Vickery, tucking the little memorandum book safely away in an inner pocket. "But I would like your promise now."

"Oh,—Mr. Vickery, tomorrow morning, please." She smiled and held out her hand. He took it and bade her good afternoon. He was not quite sure, when he went down stairs this time whether he ought to congratulate himself or not.

"These women," he said to himself, as he sought the aldermen's room, "are not to be depended on. You think you have 'em one minute, but when you go to put your finger on 'em, they are not there."

But upstairs, Gertrude was telephoning for the district attorney.

CHAPTER XVI

Divided Interests

INSTEAD of calling on the Mayor the next morning as he had planned to do, Orlando Vickery found himself hailed before the Special Commissioner and put on the grill. But he took refuge behind the corporation for which he claimed to be acting as attorney and refused to admit or confess to any transactions of a financial nature, or incriminate in any way the officials whom he had approached. He was arrested on the charge of extortion, however, and that gave the prosecution a chance to shut him up, while they arranged for an investigation before the grand jury (which was already being im-

paneled) into the schemes of the Boulevard Railway Company with the city councilmen. These proceedings were conducted as quietly as possible, but in spite of all precautions, the newspapers that evening flamed with head-lines, which varied as usual in size and sensationalism with the character of the sheet which used them; and before Roma retired for the night, the whole city was stirred by the prospect of a most spectacular fight. One half the citizens were congratulating themselves that at last, corruption and the spoilsmen were to be uprooted, while the other half revelled in the excitement and turmoil which always attends the witnessing of a deadly combat.

And meanwhile, the few,—the "ring," —were in anxious consultation. "How much do you know?" was the question that stirred them. Under an assumed coolness

and indifference, and acting in secret, there were those who saw to it that a high and mighty representative of the Boulevard Railway Company came on to arrange bail for Vickery. The board of aldermen was, apparently, most indifferent of all, and refused to talk of the new sensation either to reporters or to any one else,—except among themselves when no outsiders were near. For as yet, none of them could determine how any information had leaked out or just who had been implicated.

While events had been leading up to this point, the women of Roma had not been idle. Even before the "Progressive Workers" had thought of putting up their candidate for the mayoralty, they had been interested in the subject of pure food—and this, too, was before Senator Heyburn had introduced his famous bill to the United States Congress. One of

the liberal churches in the city had called a woman to its pulpit some years ago; and the story of what she accomplished among the young people of her parish is too long and too complicated to be incorporated here. Suffice it to say that one day she was "discovered" by a "P. W." and invited to join the club. Too earnest and active a worker to sit by and listen to literary exercises and discussions that did not get anywhere, she had almost at the beginning of her membership cast about for some definite work which she—and the rest—might do.

Now, she was a housekeeper on her small salary, and therefore must go to market for herself. Like thousands of other club women, she had come away from her provision store or grocery, half nauseated by what she had seen, or experienced through her olfactory sense. But unlike the average woman, she re-

fused to endure these things patiently. She began, quietly, to investigate. She visited the city abattoir, the wholesale markets, the cattle-pens. Even before the municipal election, she had laid out a thorough campaign in the interests of pure food, which she presented to the "Progressive Workers." The previous spring there had been an exhibition prepared by the club of foods and food-products, pure and adulterated. This exhibition had been attended by thousands of housekeepers and by a few men, and had served to awaken a semblance of interest in the question of pure food.

When Gertrude was fairly installed in office, the Reverend Martha Kendall had called at City Hall and laid before the Mayor a definite plan, the result of which was that the woman minister was made Inspector of Markets, there being such an office provided for in the old City Char-

ter, although it had remained a dead letter on the books. And no sooner did the Reverend Martha Kendall receive her appointment than she went to the club and asked to have a special committee appointed from that organization to work with her for clean markets and pure food.

When the women of any city show beyond question that they want pure food —or any other definite thing—they are going to get it, and without delay. Although there was some grumbling among the marketmen, the provision stores were soon put through such a course of scrubbing and whitening as to make the old-fashioned "spring house-cleaning," which has been the bugbear of *paterfamilias* and one of the chief assets of the paragrapher for so many years, a process of incomparably mild flavor. At the abattoir it had not been so easy to effect a reform,

but with such women as Mrs. Bateman, Mrs. Albert Turner and the Reverend Martha Kendall coming down there to inspect and to demand cleanliness and wholesome conditions, the butchers who shone before the public as "wholesale meat producers" did not dare to refuse the improvements asked for; so that by the time the grand jury began to look into the methods of the aldermen with the street railway system, there were both friends and enemies of the new administration ready to take a hand, if necessary.

Then, too, there were the men who owned, and the men who ran, the questionable resorts; the gambling dens; the saloons; the houses of which good women are popularly supposed to know nothing. All of these had been problems which Gertrude had been thinking about and planning for, before her election was settled. These matters she had talked

over with few, if any, of her advisers; for she had her own ideas—or perhaps her father's. When she was fairly established in the Mayor's chair she had appointed a reliable man as police comissioner—one who would carry out her plans. There were no spectacular raids, with their round-ups and the subsequent laxity which allows such places to flourish in the same spots and with no lapse of time (and profits). She abolished the "drag-net system" by ignoring it; but she broke up gambling, closed the wine-rooms, and the other questionable resorts, simply by stationing a trusty policeman in uniform on the steps of every one of these places, whose duty it was to take the name and address of every person who entered them; and to turn this list into the City Hall every morning and every night. As a consequence, some of these property owners and "managers" had

found their income vanishing. The latter were leaving town in bevies; but the former were nursing their grievances and were fast getting into line as open or secret enemies of the reform administration which the "woman's movement" had now fairly inaugurated.

It must not be thought, either, that the women of Roma stood solid for the woman-mayor. As long as there are husbands and wives, the latter will be guided, in greater or less degree, by the opinions of the former. The women who do not read, the women who do not care, the women who do not think, invariably take the opinions of the men nearest them, no matter how ignorant and unintelligent these men may be; and the women who do read and care and think,—but it may be as well to carry the argument no farther.

So it happened that the women of Ro-

ma were as divided as the men on the subject of city reform; although, as Gertrude noted with pride, most of the educated, thinking women could be counted on to support her in every effort she was making for the betterment of their civic conditions. It was the women like Mrs. Bella's "wash-lady" who were most opposed to her; and those other women of the underworld who do not recognize the friend of her own sex when she appears clothed in the garb of a reformer.

Thus it came about when the investigation was actually begun and occupied the most prominent place in the public interest at Roma, there were almost as many against the new mayor as there were actively or passively for her. Because, too, there was the large contingent of citizens who cannot make up their minds in a hurry, but must wait for popular opinion to crystallize before they can adopt it.

As always, the *Atlas* came out strongly for the administration of justice:

"At last," it proclaimed editorially, *"Roma has a Mayor with the courage of conviction. At last, corruption is not only detected, but it is to be dragged forth to meet its judge; at last, it is not going to be shared by our public officials. It behooves every man and every woman in Roma to uphold the present investigation and the new mayor."*

But the "ring sheet" spoke otherwise:

"After months of promising to 'reform' something, the woman-mayor and the lady-like gentlemen who are supporting her, are going to do something great. They have—by crooked and devious ways—discovered (so they affirm) Graft, with a big, big G. It is hinted that the Mayor herself is to go on the witness stand to prove that men who know a hundred-fold more about running a munici-

pality are dishonest boodlers. Just like a woman! She has got beyond the rudiments of municipal financiering and into the sub-divisions which she cannot understand and there she cries 'Graft.' She is beyond her depth and so she imagines there is fraud. Well, let her prove it; in the meantime, while she is trying to do so, she will demonstrate—exactly as we predicted last fall—what a dangerous thing it may be to a city to let a woman loose upon its administrative functions. Women were never intended for public officials. Perhaps—as the opposite party piously claim—the hand of Providence put her there; just to prove to Roma and her voters what a dangerous thing a little power may be in the hands of the incompetent and inexperienced public servant."

Gertrude read all these editorial sayings and smiled or sighed according to her mood. Sometimes they helped her

gird on her armor all the more bravely, ready to do battle for her principles to the last breath. Again, "that other Gertrude Van Deusen" came to the front and she wished in secret that she were a quiet, protected home woman, with a husband who loved her and little children to lead along the right paths. But why should John Allingham always come into her mind just there?

CHAPTER XVII

A Dumbfounded Populace

JUST one week after Vickery's last call, the district attorney and the city solicitor met in the mayor's office. The former official, Robert Joyce, was a young man with most of his reputation to gain; and he had welcomed the Vickery case as an excellent weapon with which to gain it. How he had happened to win his office was a cause for wonder to some people, until they stopped to remember that all interest in the election of the previous winter had been centered on the mayor; and that although the rank and file of voters knew that Joyce was making a fight for his candidacy, none of them had

believed he could win over the old incumbent, and had paid little heed to his political efforts. His election was one of the surprises of the campaign, but even that was not much talked about, in the excitement of proclaiming the woman for mayor of Roma.

Now, as once before, he saw his opportunity and seized it. For the past week he had done little else but probe the affairs of the Boulevard Railway scheme, scarcely eating or sleeping while he pursued the case with all the eagerness of a hound after his first fox. Gertrude Van Deusen could not have found a better ally than Robert Joyce, and she knew it. He had already secured evidence and managed his case so well that the grand jury would bring in a bill for indictment, not only against Orlando Vickery, but against Otis H. Mann, chairman of the board of aldermen. The case was to be brought

up in court on the following morning.

"I must congratulate you, Mr. Joyce, upon your quick and able work," said she. "I wanted the case hurried along, and you have surely done it."

"Mr. Armstrong has helped greatly," returned Joyce. "He has a good deal of inside knowledge, and it didn't take long to convince us both that there was a vast amount of corruption. How to clinch the evidence has been the problem. But you say you are willing to go on the witness stand?"

"I am—and Miss Snow also," answered the mayor. "I should think our evidence enough."

"It is; and yet, while we are about it we want to catch the whole outfit. We don't want to leave any loop-holes for the criminals—for they will have an expert to defend them; you may be sure of that. Some of the old aldermen may confess.

They will pin their faith to confession as the rock of salvation for them. But that is just the beginning. We are after the big man, the man who debauches as well as the man who receives. This is no partial house-cleaning. Fordham, the agent of the Roma Telephone Company, who handed the old board $1,000 each, is now on his way back from China. To save his skin, he may tell us about the money which his corporation has so generously handed over to the supervisors. Then the Telephone Company, composed of men high in the social circles of this city (with its franchise bought for a paltry few thousand dollars) will have to show its books, and if we can reach the guilty ones, on the top, indictments will soon be moving their way. I think within the next month we will have indictments from the grand jury for at least four of the more-holier-than-thou sort. That is

where the bomb is going to fall, unless my plans miscarry most woefully."

"You see there are lively times ahead," added Bailey Armstrong. "There is a man—one on whom a great deal depends —whom we want to bring to confession. He is the son of your father's old coachman—Fitzgerald."

"Newton Fitzgerald?" asked Gertrude. "The one who has a saloon over on the south side?"

"Yes—and, unfortunately for us, a properly certified license," answered Bailey. "He is a tough character, but when a boy he had a soft side. Do you suppose you could reach him, Gertie?"

"Possibly," she answered thoughtfully. "I used to have a good deal of influence over Newton when he lived in our cottage as a boy. Don't you remember—I got him to go to school regularly, and saved him from the truant officer's

clutches on two or three occasions?"

"He used to swear by you," said Bailey. "Couldn't you manage to see him now, and get him to talk?"

"Get him to confess, if you can," added Joyce. "Offer him immunity if he will tell you all he knows—and I suspect that is a good deal."

"Yes, I'll do that," answered the mayor. "I'll telephone now to his place and ask him to come over and see me."

They talked on for another half-hour, and when the two men left, their plans were all made. Gertrude and Mary Snow were to appear at the court house next morning, both ready to give valuable testimony against the grafters, testimony which would convict them out of Vickery's own mouth.

When she was alone, Gertrude at once took up her telephone and called up Newton Fitzgerald's saloon.

"Is Mr. Fitzgerald in?" she asked.

"He has just stepped out," was the answer.

"Tell him, when he comes in, to please call at the mayor's office before he goes home," replied Gertrude, "Miss Van Deusen wishes to speak with him."

She hung up her receiver and turned back to the duties of her desk. It was nearly five o'clock before she heard anything further. Then her telephone rang and a strange voice came over the wire.

"Mr. Fitzgerald has f a l l e n and sprained his knee. He has to be put to bed, but wants to know if you won't come to see him tonight. He wants to talk with you about the investigation—has something to tell you."

"Where does he live?" asked the mayor.

"In the Sutherland," was the reply, "the big apartment building back of the American House."

"Very well. Tell him I will be there with Miss Snow at eight o'clock," she answered; and then she called Mary Snow and told her of the appointment.

"Don't you think we ought to take someone else along?—a man—Bailey Armstrong, say?"

"O, no," returned the Mayor, confidently. "Fitzgerald would not talk before him—or any other man—in my opinion. He was a peculiar boy, but I could manage him. It will be better for us to go alone—and quietly. We won't even take the carriage. I'll come down on the car at a quarter before eight and meet you at Harne's drug store. Then we'll just go quietly up to Fitzgerald's flat. I know his wife."

"Very well," said Mary. If she did not feel quite satisfied with the plan, it was not for her to question the mayor's authority, and she said no more.

But the next morning the newspapers brought a new sensation to a startled city. Two important pieces of news furnished excitement enough to arouse even the staid and respectable old *Atlas*. People gathered in knots on street corners to discuss them. The air was breezy with excitement. The street corners were blocked with gathering knots of indignant citizens, eager crowds gathered in front of newspaper bulletin boards, questioning among themselves whether there was any respect for law and order left in Roma; whether life was safe on the open street; whether the public was to be fooled any longer by charlatans and tricksters; whether the police could or would do anything in the premises. In short, every citizen of Roma, rich or poor, old or young, was aroused at last by these two bits of news.

The startling news was—

Orlando Vickery had "jumped his bail" and disappeared; and

The Mayor and her private secretary had not been seen nor heard from since they left the drug-store the previous evening at a quarter before eight.

CHAPTER XVIII

A Futile Search

T WOULD seem that in a city of fifty thousand inhabitants, it would be impossible for the Mayor and his (or her) private secretary to drop so suddenly and completely from sight as to leave no trace or clue behind them; yet such was the fact. Knowing Fitzgerald to be of a peculiar temperament, Gertrude had arranged to meet him as quietly as possible. Had her cousin, Jessie Craig, been at home, she would have told her where she was going, but that lady had gone to Philadelphia for a few days' visit, and there was no one in the Van Deusen home but the servants, to whom Miss Van Deu-

sen had merely remarked that she was going out and would be back, probably, about ten.

Mary Snow lived in an apartment hotel and occupied her two-room suite in spinster independence, carrying her own latchkey and accounting to no one for her goings and comings. So accustomed had the clerks and elevator-boys become to seeing her come in, during her newspaper days, at all hours of the night, that they paid little heed to her movements. So there was no one to feel any alarm when midnight came and they did not return from their excursion to the suffering Fitzgerald.

Towards morning, however, when Miss Van Deusen failed to appear, the old butler who had known her so many years, became alarmed, and at daylight telephoned to Bailey Armstrong. The news came to him with a shock, but he went at

once to Miss Snow's hotel, thinking the Mayor might have stayed there for some reason. When he found them both missing, he became alarmed, sent for the chief of police and the district attorney, and telegraphed Jessie Craig to return.

A systematic search was instituted, detectives set to work, and all the majestic machinery of the law put in motion. It had happened strangely enough, that the proprietor of the drug-store which had been their rendezvous was out when the two women had met there, and neither of the two young clerks knew the Mayor or her secretary by sight. Consequently, there was not a soul who had seen or recognized either of them after they had set out for the appointment with Fitzgerald. Neither had anyone known of that appointment; nor would it have mattered in the least if they had, since, Fitzgerald himself, alive and well, had known noth-

ing of the engagement made in his name, and was even now talking loudly against the outrage and the shame of what was plainly foul play.

"Kidnaping," every other man said, and believed, and the detectives were on a still hunt again for the mysterious electric cab of election eve. In this particular line of search John Allingham was bending all his energies. Every garage in the city was visited and made to account for each one of its machines. No chauffeur was left unquestioned, and the records were thoroughly examined—all with the foolish consciousness that nothing could be easier than for some private owner or renter of an automobile to have skimmed quietly away with the mayor in his tonneau, quite out of reach of the law. As the day passed, rumors of flying automobiles came in from all directions, making a hopeless confusion of clues that led nowhere.

At City Hall, the chairman of the board of aldermen took the helm, becoming acting-mayor for the time being. Although he directed the seach for the mayor and her secretary with much skill and patience, the Honorable Otis H. Mann was enjoying an inflated sense of independence, such as does not come often to a small man on large occasions.

As the day closed and no news came from the missing women, the excitement grew. Crowds gathered on the streets and squares, until someone, by a happy thought, called for a mass-meeting in Masonic Temple. If Gertrude could have heard the speeches made there, and noted the sympathy and pride of her townspeople, she would have felt her strength renewed as the eagle. For however they might have been divided in opinion before, every man, woman and child were solidly for her now. A great wave of indigna-

tion had swept the city, and left the public heart alive with love and sorrow for the brave young woman who had dared take up this burden. Although they talked hopefully and determinedly of perfecting their search and restoring her to her office, many a heart was cherishing a great fear that death, or worse than death, had already overtaken her.

"A terrible thing has befallen us," one of the speakers was saying. "And an awful state of affairs exists when the mayor of our own city can be completely swallowed up—and hidden from all pursuit—in an evening. When we remember that it is a woman—two women—of the highest breeding and inheritance who have been so foully dealt with, we are overwhelmed with a sense of disaster."

"But we must find a way—we must organize our forces," interrupted another. "They must, they shall be found."

There was much ardent talk, but little practical advice, and when Bailey Armstrong and John Allingham left the hall together, the hearts of both were heavy.

"I'd give all I've got in the world to find those two," said Bailey. "But between you and me, it looks pretty dark. There was something queer about it. Why should Gertrude go out at night alone? Why didn't she call on me to go with her? She often did, if no one else was going—from the house, I mean."

"Did you hear her say anything about an appointment?—or Miss Snow?" asked Allingham. "Evidently they had one."

"Not a word. I was in the office yesterday. We talked things over, some. I asked her—" Bailey stopped. "Say, she was going to telephone Newton Fitzgerald to come up. You don't suppose he's in it?"

"Let's go over to his saloon," said Al-

lingham. "Here's a car coming now."

But when they got over there, Fitzgerald was declaiming loudly gainst the rotten politics of Roma.

"I've known her since she was a kid," he was saying to a gang of beery individuals around his door, "and she's been an angel of light to me an' mine. I voted for her—yes, I'm proud to say I did, against the party though it was. And I shall do it again, if she comes back alive. Why, I found a note on my desk this morning when I came in, that my barkeeper put there, saying she'd telephoned for me to come up to the Hall yesterday afternoon. I'd a' gone, only I was out of town and didn't get back here last night at all. Mebbe I'd 've been of use to her some way if I'd been on time. Anyway, I'm going on a still hunt for her tomorrow, all by my lonesome."

"He's sincere enough," remarked Bai-

ley. "Newton's a good-hearted fellow. He always liked Gertrude."

They walked back and soon separated for the night, but neither of them slept, for thinking of those two, so suddenly and mysteriously snatched away.

As John Allingham walked home he lived over again the exciting evening before election. He recalled the moonlit night, the rushing automobile, the ghostly shadows chasing themselves in swift procession ever behind him. He remembered the shock and the overturn and finding himself face to face with Gertrude Van Deusen on the pine-shaded road. He lived again through the rushing ride home, hearing again her silvery voice as she talked, and feeling again the indefinable charm of her presence. He forgot —that she was doing a man's work; he thought only of her femininity and grace and beauty. Then, realizing afresh the

calamity that had befallen the city, he groaned aloud.

"Oh, my God!" he muttered. "If she is lost—"

Then he knew, all suddenly and with a great heartache, that he loved a woman—that she was Gertrude Van Deusen—and that she was lost, and that she might be dead, or in great misery and sorrow.

"Good God," he cried, "what can I do to help her?"

CHAPTER XIX

The Boodlers Score

A WEEK later, there was a meeting of the city council, at the mayor's office, called by the chairman of the board of aldermen, to "discuss the unusual state of affairs and find a way out," as Mr. Otis H. Mann put it. Every member was present, and Mr. Mann counted his supporters carefully as he opened the meeting for business. The mayor's friends were strong and outspoken, he decided, but they were not in the majority. He began by making a rather neat speech, deploring the state of things in Roma, and trusting that the citizens' committee, which had been organized the week before for the pur-

pose of discovering the absent officials, would be successful.

"A terrible condition of municipal affairs exists," he went on smoothly, "when its chief magistrate can be abducted and kept hidden, without—or with?—her own volition for a whole week. Only in the extravaganzas of modern romance could we look for similar happenings. Just what is our duty in the premises, gentlemen, is a serious question. The citizens' committee has taken the work of restoring our mayor to her place out of our hands; but I think we should assure them of our co-operation and offer to place every means of assistance at their disposal. Will some one make a motion to that effect?"

The motion was quickly made and seconded, but before it was put Mr. Turner was on his feet.

"I wish to be put on record," he began,

"as of the opinion that it is nothing to our credit that the citizens had to call a mass-meeting and form their own committee. We should have led in this work, and if we could not do that, every one of us should have been on the committee. May I inquire why but five of the councilmen are identified with the movement to find Miss Van Deusen and her secretary—to discover the perpetrators of this outrage and bring them to punishment?"

"The member is unduly excited," replied the chairman, in his most unctuous tones. "It is not easy to know what to do in the position which has suddenly been forced upon me—a condition without precedent, so far as I know, in the whole country. If I have failed in my duty, I ask your pardon; but with so many local issues—so many details at loose ends in the mayor's office—I beg your pardon, gentlemen, for mentioning this."

"Question, question," called a voice with a strong accent from the back row. "Question—I call for the question," echoed another.

The chairman hastened to put the motion and the expression of sympathy and co-operation with the citizens' committee was unanimous.

"The motion seems to prevail—the motion prevails. The secretary is instructed to communicate this vote at once," added the chairman.

"And now I must add, by the force of stringent necessity which I find in my endeavor to carry on the work of our mayor," said the chairman, "that it became necessary for us to transact a little business here tonight. Exigencies are arising which make it important to have some action taken on the sub-letting of contracts. Will some member move that the present incumbent be given discretion-

ary power to act in these matters?"

"No, no," shouted Turner, and was echoed by two or three others. But Blatchley rose and moved that the chairman of the board of aldermen be allowed to go ahead with all the city's business during the indefinite absence of the mayor, using his discretion therein.

The motion was seconded by several others and when Mr. Mason arose, there was a chorus of "Question, question," from the opposite faction. He would not give way, however, and stood his ground for some moments, arguing for fair play, and finally offering a substitute motion, asking that no contracts be given out and only routine business be transacted while the present crisis was on; but he might as well have talked to the vagrant wind. Not over half a dozen men present were in entire sympathy with him, and they were helpless. It soon became evident

that the others had been primed for this meeting—as indeed was the case, every doubtful one having been called to a private confab with the acting mayor, and promised something for good behavior.

"Isn't there an ordinance that prevents our taking any action whatever, until the mayor has been absent a fortnight?" finally asked Mason.

"That ordinance was changed two years ago," replied the chairman. "The time is now limited to one week."

"And you have waited just that," replied Mr. Mason, sitting down. He saw it was impossible to struggle any longer.

So the acting mayor was given full power to do what he pleased while the mayor was still secluded. Fortunately, it was voted to keep this decision from the newspapers; for feeling was growing daily more bitter against the city council, and the people were already asking how

much the aldermen knew about the abduction of their woman-mayor, and why they were not more active in the search for her.

CHAPTER XX

An Enforced Vacation

WHEN Gertrude Van Deusen decided to go to see Newton Fitzgerald on that eventful evening, she thought first, as has been intimated already, of calling on Bailey Armstrong to escort her. But as she hoped to win Newton's confidence, and did not like to have her visit known to others, she believed that by going quietly, alone with Mary Snow, she would be doing wisely. And so the two met at the drug-store, as previously arranged, and attracted no attention whatever.

When they arrived at the address given them, they found a big apartment block, with stores underneath. There was no

one in the vestibule as they entered, but a man stood waiting at the elevator —apparently the functionary who had charge of the lift.

"Does Newton Fitzgerald live here?" asked Gertrude.

The man motioned to the elevator and the two young women entered and were quickly borne to the top floor.

"This way," said the man, leading the way down a narrow corridor, and pressing an electric button at the last door on the right.

It was opened by a neatly dressed Irish woman, who led the way into a comfortably furnished living-room.

"Be seated," she said. "I'll be back in a while." She spoke with a brogue, and they did not notice the peculiar expression. For some moments they remained quietly waiting; but no one came.

"He must be pretty sick, the place is

so quiet," said Mary Snow, at last.

"Probably," assented Gertrude. "But I suppose they'll call us when they are ready."

Fifteen minutes, thirty, forty-five—an hour went by, and still no one came. The place was oppressively still. The electric lights burned brightly; a breeze came in from an open window; the street sounds below floated up to them, insistent and garish. But no rustle of garments, no hushed voices, no slightest motion in the rooms beyond came through the door.

"This is strange," said Gertrude at last. "Newton must be very ill—or something." She arose. "I wonder if we'd better investigate. I hate to intrude, but we ought to be getting back, I didn't tell anybody at home where I was going."

"Nor I—I didn't tell anybody," said Mary. "I thought we should be back long ago. Yes, let us find someone."

They went on through the open door into a bedroom. Out of this opened a small dining room, and beyond that a little kitchen. There was a tiny bathroom, and lights were burning in all the rooms. But there was no sign of the sick man.

They looked at one another, puzzled and anxious.

"They seem to have gone out," said Mary. "Here is another bedroom. Perhaps Fitzgerald is here."

But the bed, all clean and white, had not been disturbed.

Simultaneously, they turned and went back to the door by which they had entered the flat. It was locked.

"We've been trapped," said Gertrude in a low voice. "Let's look through the place."

They began another search, opening closet doors and looking into wardrobes

and cupboards and under the furniture. They went to the kitchen and tried the door into the back passage; but that, too, was locked. There was nobody else in the flat; there was no possible way of getting out.

"The windows," said Gertrude. "There should be fire escapes."

But there were not. They could not raise the windows from the bottom, either, although they could lower them slightly from the top for air. They climbed up and peeped over, only to discover that they were seven stories from the ground, and looked only into a light-well. The flat across from them was unoccupied.

They looked at their watches. It was ten o'clock—even then the churches were chiming out the hour.

"Let us look for a note, or some intimation of what to expect," said Mary.

"I wonder if they are going to keep us here all night."

"It's a trick," said Gertrude. "There's no knowing how long we may stay—nor what will happen to us. I'm glad I thought of this before I started out alone tonight." And she produced a small revolver from her coat pocket.

"Mercy!" cried Mary, "do you carry that? Would you know how to use it?"

"I carried it when father and I walked through the Pyrenees a few years ago," answered Gertrude. "I used it once—to good advantage—and I could again, if I had to," she added. "Now, let us see what the gods—or the other thing—have provided."

Another search showed them that their flat was well-provisioned, well-furnished, heated and lighted. There were a few books and magazines, a piano, a writing desk, even a pack of playing cards.

"We may have to resort to solitaire yet," laughed Mary. "Though nothing short of imprisonment could induce me to fool away my time with the silly game."

"Well, they have provided for an indefinite stay, I fear," said Gertrude. "Somehow, I have a feeling that we are not going to get out easily. We must think up some way of letting our friends know we are here."

But their jailers had looked out for that. They could hang towels from their upper windows, but to what end, since these could not be seen?

There was no stationery in the desk, but Mary had a pocket diary in her chatelaine bag. "We will write a note and shove it through the crack under the door," they said—and did, repeatedly, the ensuing week—but no answer came.

"I should think somebody would question the elevator boy," said Mary. "Or,

that, when he hears we are gone, he will remember bringing us here."

"That was not the regular boy—depend upon it," answered Gertrude. "It was one of the conspirators, if there was a conspiracy, and he will not tell. It was Orlando Vickery who was behind this."

"Shall we go to bed tonight?" asked Mary.

"No, indeed," said Gertrude. "We couldn't possibly sleep. And besides—something might happen."

But nothing did happen. The slow night wore away and morning came. When the whistles below were calling people to their work, the two young women got up from their couch and easy-chair, and went to the windows again; but they could see nothing but the blank wall of a light-well. They were trapped and helpless.

"Well, we may as well be philosophical

while we can," said Mary. "There are coffee and breakfast things in the pantry. I saw them last night. I'm used to getting my own light breakfast. Let's eat."

They prepared and ate their simple meal and went back, to wonder and speculate and devise new ways of getting some message to the outside world; but nothing came of it. They could do nothing more than scribble notes on pages torn from the diary and throw them from the tops of the windows into the light-well, where they fell harmlessly into the rubbish heap that gathered unnoticed in the corners. The day wore monotonously along and was succeeded by another and another. Then a note was found shoved under the front door in the early dawn.

"Open the little door to the dumb-waiter in the pantry and find supplies."

They obeyed, and found a basket of fruit, cream, vegetables and meat. They

wrote an appealing note and placed in the basket and tried to send it down; but they could not manipulate the dumb-waiter. They left the little door open, to know when the basket descended, but it did not go down until some time during the following night. The only reply to their note—if it was a reply—was a second typewritten note, that came under the door late the fourth evening.

"You can be let out any time that Miss Van Deusen will send down her signed and witnessed resignation from the office of mayor. Push it through the crack and the door will be opened for you."

When they read it, Gertrude's face flushed hotly. "So they think to force me out, do they?"

"Don't you resign, Miss Van Deusen," said Mary. "We'll stay here and starve, first. Somebody will find us—some time."

"I've not the slightest intention of re-

signing," replied the other. "And how often have I asked you to call me Gertrude? We aren't mayor and secretary now—or I'd command you to call me by my given name. We are just two prisoners."

"Then I'll do as you say—if I don't forget—Gertrude," answered Mary.

"I wonder what they are doing down below," said Mary later in the day.

"How many times do you think we've said that this week?" laughed Gertrude. "We've heard the usual street sounds, and an unusual amount of bell-ringing—which may or may not have been on our account."

"At least, we haven't heard them toll the bells for us!" interrupted Mary. "That's something."

"But not a paper, not a line, not a breath from the outside world has reached up—except the basket of provi-

sions," exclaimed Gertrude, ruefully.

"And the demand for your resignation," interrupted Mary again. "Honestly, now, Gertrude, don't you wish at the bottom of your heart, that you had never gone into politics? That you'd let the office of mayor go begging last fall?"

Gertrude's face was a study. For an instant her friend thought she was about to confess that she had made a mistake. Then the old spirit flared up. Gertrude held her head high.

"I would never own it if I did," she said. "When the next election comes around, however—"

She did not finish her remark, but picked up a book and fell to reading.

"This 'Fated to Conquer' isn't a bad story, Mary," she said after a while. "When I read such a book—of love and romance and all that—I wish I were, or had been, of the marrying kind of women.

As it is—I'm going to say it in confidence, Mary—I believe, when we get out of this, I'll marry Bailey."

She did not notice her friend's peculiar expression, but talked idly on. "You know he has wanted to marry me several times in the past. To be sure, he hasn't proposed for a couple of years, but he will. A man will always propose to the woman he loves if she gives him half a chance."

"Why didn't you marry him?" asked Mary in an expressionless voice.

"O, I never loved him, or thought I didn't," answered Gertrude. "I didn't fully believe in his love for me, either; that is, he did not love me as I wanted to be loved. We are comrades from childhood, and sort of cousins. He's been as near a brother to me as he could and I've been fond of him in that kind of way."

"Then you don't love him—not really?" asked Mary; and she could not entirely

suppress a joyous note in her voice.

"Well, yes," blandly replied Gertrude. "I love Bailey in a way. Not the passionate kind of love one reads of in novels —like this, for instance;" she indicated the book she had been reading. "The heroine goes through all sorts of tribulations for love's sake, and the hero finally renounces everything for her sake; but that is only in books. People don't love in that violent fashion. Mutual esteem and confidence are what I see between the happiest married couples of my acquaintance. Bailey is thoroughly reliable, helpful and honorable. I am tired of standing up to the world alone. It must be a comfort to have a good husband to take care of you."

"It must indeed," replied Mary, inscrutably.

CHAPTER XXI

Word from the Missing

"THERE seems to be something queer about the way the search goes on," said Bailey to Allingham. "They don't pull together, some way."

"I think it's because there is no real, efficient head to the committee," returned Allingham. "Blatchley's afraid of running counter to Mann; or if not exactly that, he waits for our acting mayor to take the initiative."

"Which he will never do," retorted Bailey. "It isn't in him—and besides—"

"I know what you mean," replied Allingham. "You don't have to put it in words. But something more definite and

aggressive has got to be done than is doing now."

"Right you are," said Armstrong. "The question is—what?"

"The people are getting clamorous, not to say critical," said Allingham, "Why not call another mass-meeting and put it right to them to demand or institute a better organized search for the missing mayor?"

"Good idea," said Bailey. "Let's talk it over with Mason and Turner and Jewett, and see if we can't stir Mann up a bit."

The two men had been lunching together at the club, with a little talk afterwards, while they smoked their cigars in the lazy summer atmosphere of the well-kept garden.

"Well, here it is three o'clock," added Bailey; "and I have an appointment at a quarter-past. So long."

"I must be going, too;" and Allingham followed, walking down street as far as his office. Once there, he hung up his hat, changed his coat for a thinner one, and sat down to his desk, whereupon a pile of letters lay unopened. It was a warm day, and Allingham took his own time to read his correspondence, and jot down on the back of the letters the reply which he wished his secretary to write when she arrived in the morning. Then he rested his head in his hands and his elbows on the desk for a few moments' quiet thought before closing his office for the day. It was a habit he had, when alone, and today the baffling situation with regard to the woman-mayor was making him more worried than ever.

"There's some devilish chicanery going on in high quarters," he told himself, "or this search would be conducted differently. The thing for us to do is to find out

just what O. H. M., Esquire, is up to in his little mind. Hullo, what's this?"

A slip of paper had been tossed by the vagrant wind, through the open window onto his desk and lay there, open, under his eyes. Ordinarily, he would have swept the crumpled thing into his waste basket. But the mysterious power which guides us when we do the unexpected thing, stayed his hands, and the half-obliterated note arrested his attention.

confined in top
block. Safe but
come to the corner
Streets and liberate
Gertrude
Mary S

"Good Heavens!" cried Allingham. "They are somewhere in the neighborhood—or were, when this was written. No date, nothing to show where they were or when. Just like a woman. Well, well,

here's something to work on at last, thank Heaven." He turned the piece of paper over and over, but there was nothing more to be seen, and he held it up to the light in vain, when he tried to make out what the penciled words had been which had completed the sentence.

"Let's see. This is Thursday. What day was it, when it rained so? Tuesday? No. Sunday? Then this was written before that and has laid out where it was washed by the rain. Then it has dried in the sun and the wind caught it up and brought it here. Blessed wind!"

He walked over to the window and looked down into the street. He had two rooms, one of them a small, back room, opening into a court; but this piece of paper had floated in from the street under his very eyes. He looked across at the big block opposite. She might be right there. A big department store occu-

pied the lower floors—but the upper stories seemed to be tenements for living purposes. What if she should be there, now—at this very moment? Or here, under the same roof with himself?

The thought electrified him and he went out, locking his door behind him. There was an elevator. "Top," the note had said. He took the lift and went to the topmost floor, stealing down the corridors on a voyage of discovery, and feeling like a thief, or a detective. But the rooms were all occuped by tailors or the like, and every door stood hospitably open. Surely he could not reasonably disturb these people and search their premises without a warrant.

He turned and went down again, with the happy inspiration to telephone to the chief of police and to Bailey Armstrong.

"If you could come right here," he said to the former, "I can not only give you

some important information, but give you an idea of this locality which you may not possess. For I have a positive clue."

"I'll be with you in fifteen minutes," replied the official, who cared not a rap for the dignity of his position.

To Bailey, Allingham only said: "Come down here at once, I've something definite and important to tell you and to show you. But not a word over the telephone."

In five minutes Bailey came in, breathless. "What is it?" he demanded.

"Read this," and Allingham put the scrap of paper in his hands and related the story of its anchorage on his desk after days of weary wandering. Before the tale was fairly unfolded, the chief of police appeared and it had to be told all over again.

"Now," said Allingham, when he had finished, "what is the first and quickest thing to be done?"

"Organize," answered the chief. "Get a few men together and go through this section of the town thoroughly. Strange we haven't done more right here. We've gone on the theory that they were in the suburbs or in some other town."

"And probably they have been right under our noses, all the time," said Bailey.

"Or over them," returned the chief. "You say you went upstairs."

"Yes. They can't be here," replied Allingham. "Not on the top floor. But there are tenements over opposite."

"We'll take 'em all in, if necessary," said the chief. "What do you say to my coming up here tonight and meeting you two. I'll have a dozen plain-clothes men happen around, and we'll do a little looking around here quietly, between nine and twelve."

"Great," said Armstrong.

"I'll have the office open at eight-thirty," said Allingham.

The chief came alone, however, at a quarter of nine, greeting Bailey and Allingham confidently.

"Where are your men?" asked Allingham, fearful lest the chief's courage had given out.

"You didn't think I'd arouse the suspicion of the whole neighborhood by bringing a whole posse up here with me?" retorted the official. "They're scattered around the square, nosing about quietly. If they can pick up anything it mightn't come amiss. We'd all better saunter around a little, first. We'll go over to Erlich's drug-store and have a soda. A couple of my men will fall in with us there. Later we'll go into the saloon across the way. Before we get out, they'll all be with us, or outside the building—see?"

And they were; but previous to this, several of the men had made errands into the various blocks in that section, but had added no bits of information to their scanty stock. Several quiet families were surprised by the appearance at their doors of strange men on strange errands, but not a clue could be obtained that fastened suspicion on anyone. It seemed pretty clear that there were no kidnaped women in the block opposite, nor in the row of blocks on the side where John Allingham had his office. They went in and out of every block that was not locked upon the street, and invaded every floor, but without avail. Their search lasted until twelve, when the plain-clothes men dropped off quietly and went home.

"Tomorrow we'll investigate the places where we can't get into tonight, and the blocks back of this one. There is an apartment house back of us, isn't there?"

"I don't know," answered Allingham. "I never go over onto Collins Avenue. But—yes, there is a block or two there. We didn't get around there tonight?"

"Tut-tut, one thing at a time," answered the chief. "The note came in at your front window, you said. It wouldn't have been likely to fly over from a street behind you—would it?"

"I'm not so sure of that!" muttered Bailey; and when the chief had gone, he added: "I'm going to sneak around into Collins Avenue before I go home, and sort of get the lay of the land. Come, too?"

"I'll join you in a minute," answered Allingham. "I'm not sure I closed the windows to my back office. Wait for me."

"No; I'll stroll round there and be taking a look," answered Bailey. "You can meet me at a little drug-store there is

around the corner." He strolled away and his friend went upstairs to his office. He opened the door with his latch-key, as quietly as possible, meaning just to take a look, and make things secure for the night, but—

There, under the bright electric light, stood—Gertrude Van Deusen.

CHAPTER XXII

A Daring Escape

ERTRUDE!" he cried, springing forward; and neither of them realized that he was holding both her hands in his strong, eager clasp.

"Yes," she answered. "It is I."

"But what—where—where have you been?" stammered Allingham. "How did you get here?"

"Through your back window," said Gertrude, "to answer the last question first. The other needs a longer answer; but if you'll come with me I can show you the place and get poor Mary out—for she is 'ill and in prison.' But you'd better get help, for the place where we've

been confined is watched, I should say."

"I'll get Bailey. Please sit down and wait quietly." And Allingham led her to his most comfortable chair. "I'll be back in two minutes." And he went out, clicking the latch together after him.

"A prisoner again," said Gertrude to herself. "But this time a safe one, thank God."

It was hardly sixty seconds before Allingham was around the corner and entering the drug-store where Bailey had promised to be. He was there, waiting.

"O, Bailey, she is safe. She is found. She is in my office," said Allingham, in a low, rapid tone.

"Mary? Thank God!—where?" said Bailey.

"Mary? — no, Gertrude — Miss Van Deusen, I mean," he stammered, wonderingly. "Mary Snow is still incarcerated somewhere about here. Come quick. I'll

telephone for the chief again. He cannot have got to bed yet."

By this time they were upstairs and at Allingham's door, for they had not done their talking standing still. Allingham produced his key. "We must get them both home tonight," he said, and opened the door.

"O, Bailey!" cried Gertrude, coming forward impulsively. "I'm so glad you've come."

And then Bailey answered, "O, Gertie," and throwing his arms around her, kissed her affectionately on the brow. "O, Gertie, where have you been? And where is Mary?"

"And how did you get here?" Allingham wanted to ask this question, but the sight of that kiss had seemed to paralyze him. It was Bailey, then, who had won her love—Bailey, on whom life showered every blessing, whom all women loved,

whom everybody admired. And he—what a fool he was!

So he only went to the telephone and called up the private residence of the chief of police.

"Got in? I was afraid you'd gone to bed," he said. "Well, Miss Van Deusen is in this office—what? Yes—I say, Miss Van Deusen is here. Yes, in my office. How? I don't know myself yet. But we must get Miss Snow at once. Come up quick. Can you get your men? Yes, all right. We'll wait for you. Good-by."

"Hurry up, Jack," said Bailey. "Gertie's story's waiting for you. Now, old girl, go ahead."

"Nice, respectful way to address your mayor," laughed Gertrude, to whom the world had suddenly become a broader and brighter place than ever. "Well, then here goes."

She began at the beginning of her story

and told how she and Mary Snow had set out for Newton Fitzgerald's sick bed; how they had been trapped, and how the days had dragged in the flat.

"We wrote a score of notes on leaves torn from Mary's diary," she went on, "and tucked them out of the top of the window and under the bottom of the door. But nothing ever came of them."

Allingham handed her the slip of washed-out paper that still lay on his desk.

"That floated in here this afternoon," he said. "It's the first clue we've had."

"We've been searching this neighborhood tonight," added Bailey. "We'd have got you tomorrow, sure."

"Then I wish I'd waited," said Gertrude. "Look at my hands." She held them, palms out. They were all red and swollen. Allingham had an insane desire to snatch and kiss them, but Bailey regarded them coolly enough.

"Rough on you, Gert. How did that happen?" he asked.

"Well, after trying every means we could think of to get some word to the outside world, we decided to make our escape somehow. We tore up the sheets and blankets and twisted them into a strong cable. This we fastened securely to the kitchen pipes, and with our nail-files we managed to saw away the copper netting that had been nailed across the window frames, and then to pry up the lower sash. We had planned to come down, both of us, on this, last night; but Mary was taken ill yesterday, and I wouldn't come without her. Today she seemed worse instead of better, and I came down for help."

"You came down that rope—yourself?" said Allingham.

"Yes—like any convict, escaping from state's prison," answered Gertrude. "Of

course I had no idea where I should land, nor into what hands I might fall. I was sure we were watched, but believed only from the front door—"

"Go on," said Bailey, impatiently. "Did you leave Mary alone in that flat?"

"Of course," answered Gertrude. "What else was there to do? But instead of landing in the enemy's camp, I found myself in the hands of a good Samaritan." She smiled at Allingham, and his heart sang foolishly. "When my feet struck bottom I found myself where I expected to be—at the bottom of the light-well. I looked around me for some way of escape, and saw an open window. I came through it—and here I am."

"Why don't that man come along?" said Bailey, impatiently—"with Mary sick up there and alone—Oh, here he is;" and the chief of police entered, eager to seize Miss Van Deusen's hand and hear

her story of the kidnaping and escape.

"Half a dozen men are waiting outside," he said, when she had told him the main facts. "There is no need of wasting further time. Come."

They all filed out, Gertrude leading the way with Bailey, who assumed the care of her with such an air of possession that Allingham's heart sank again. It was but a few moments before they were ascending the stairs of the apartment house —the elevator ceasing to run after one o'clock. Gertrude led the way to the further end of the corridor. As they approached it, the dark figure of a man skulked out of the shadow and leapt through the open window.

"Quick! After him!" cried Bailey. "A man just went through that window."

Two of the policemen ran to the window and onto the fire-escape which led down and out. But before they had

reached it, the fleeing figure had gone in at an open window on the fifth floor, and escaped, and before the pursuers had discovered this, the pursued was downstairs, out and on a trolley car, safely out of harm's way.

Upstairs Bailey was impatiently trying to ring the bell, and they were shaking the door, trying to rouse Mary Snow. But she was lying in a dead faint inside, having heard their approach and overtaxed her strength in trying to reach the door.

"Break it," ordered the chief. It was but a moment before the half dozen men had the door down, and they all walked in.

"O, Mary!" cried Gertrude. "She has fainted. Carry her in there," and she pointed to the bedroom. Bailey was beside the prostrate girl in a moment, and already had her in his arms. He followed

Gertrude into the adjoining room and laid her on the bed.

"Now, go out," commanded Gertrude, seeing that he still hung over her secretary. "I must be alone with her a few minutes. I'll call you as soon as she is able to see you."

He went reluctantly and joined the others in their examination of the place. In the meantime, Gertrude administered simple restoratives to Mary, and she was able to open her eyes.

"It's all right," cried Gertrude smilingly. "I reached safety and we're going out the moment you're able. So hurry up, please."

"Where's Bailey?" was Mary's only reply.

"Just outside; I'll call him," answered Gertrude, wondering at this reception of her news. But she stepped to the door and motioned to Armstrong, who was

hovering outside. He came in and closed the door.

"Mary!" he cried in a voice that Gertrude had never heard.

"Bailey!" Mary answered, reaching out both hands.

Then a great light dawned in Gertrude's mind. She went out softly—but they did not even look to see what had become of her.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Hearts of the People

HERE was great excitement in Roma the following morning, when the people read in head-lines that occupied half or more of the first page of the morning paper,

THE MAYOR IS FOUND

Newspaper reporters had reached the Van Deusen residence before the two women did, and they did not leave until the story of their ten days' adventure (wonderfully simple from their point of view) had been told. The presses waited while the facts were properly embellished and each paper vied with the other to get

the longest and most readable, if not the most startling story.

It seemed almost inconceivable that two prominent women could have been imprisoned in the center of the town and concealed for ten days—and yet it had been done; and now that they were restored to their friends—and the public—once more, that there should not be the slightest clue to the persons behind the plot.

"It is the most successful trick ever perpetrated," announced the *Atlas, "and one no sane man would ever have admitted possible. The mayor has not seen a human being, except Miss Snow, nor heard any other human voice for ten days. No detective has yet found who sent her the message signed by Newton Fitzgerald, nor can they discover who was at the elevator to receive them when they mounted to their place of concealment, the regular incumbent having already proved an alibi.*

They met in the drug-store, but no one recognized or noticed them. The plot was carefully laid and successfully carried out. By whom, is at present, a mystery."

By nine o'clock the Mayor was at her desk, with Mary Snow in her office. Friends tried to deter her, on the plea of needed rest, but she only laughed at them.

"Rest? What else have I done but rest, for ten days past?" she asked.

"Worry, I should hope," answered her cousin Jessica. "I'm sure the rest are nearly worn out with worrying about you."

"I didn't worry—not so very much," said Gertrude. "I felt sure we were confined only to make me resign—or to give them a chance at the mayor's office, to get some nefarious contract through, or to secrete evidence in the street railway case, and I'm in a hurry to get down there and find out just what they have been doing."

"We felt sure our kidnapers wouldn't dare to do us any real harm," added Mary. "They've seen that we had plenty to eat and we have not suffered in any way. As Gertrude says, we've done nothing but rest."

"Well, I suppose you'll have to go then," said Jessica. "But you'll just have to hold a reception all day. Every man, woman and child will be there to shake hands with you and congratulate you."

But the citizens did not wait for them to reach their office. Before Gertrude's carriage appeared in the square in front of the city hall, the citizens had unharnessed the horses and were drawing her, as if she had been some princess royal and they her subjects.

Men that voted against her, men that had denounced her in private and public, joined the procession and helped to give her such a welcome as to bring tears

to her eyes and choke her utterance.

When they reached the square, it was full of the surging, shouting populace who crowded about, seizing her hands and demonstrating in every possible way their joy at her return. If any of her captors had been looking on, he could not have doubted whether the town would be friendly to him just then.

They reached the City Hall at last, but even then, the mayor was not allowed to get out.

"Speech, speech," they were crying all about her; and Gertrude stood up, choking back her tears and trying to speak. This was what it meant to reach the popular heart, at last.

"Friends," she said, "I cannot tell you what this welcome means to us. Never again can I feel discouragement or lose faith in the people of Roma. You are showing me that I am as dear to you as

you are to me. I cannot say more. Your welcome thrills me to the heart, and it seems to me I can never outlive this moment of joyous welcome. Let us go now —to our homes, our offices, our stores; and while we thank God that he has brought us out from the shadow into the light of day, let us ask Him, all humbly, for help in making our beloved Roma a fairer, a better, a purer city—a city of ideals realized and lofty purposes fulfilled."

She sat down exhausted and the crowd saw that she was near to over-taxing her strength. They began to disperse, but one cried out:

"The little secretary, too. Three cheers for Mary Snow!"

They were given spontaneously, ringing to the echo, and Mary, blushing and tremulous, rose and thanked them. Then the crowd parted to let the two women descend and go up to the hall. Had they

been men and the same feeling prevailed, the mayor would have been carried in on broad shoulders, and amid shouts and cheers; but although the thought occurred to the leaders of the good-natured mob, there was something about her that made them remember the old Senator.

"She's not the kind for that," they said, and stood with bared heads while she passed in and out of sight.

"Oh, but it's good to get back here," said Mary, as they found themselves once more in the mayor's rooms. "I shall be glad to buckle down to work again."

But there was little chance for "buckling down" that day. Even as she spoke, Bailey Armstrong was beside Mary Snow with warm greetings and Allingham was exchanging salutations with the Mayor herself. A stream of others were coming in, all the employees about the place, and hundreds of others, who wanted to clasp

the hands of the returned prisoners, and assure them of their loyal support.

The women of the city began to arrive about ten o'clock, the "Progressives" arriving at that hour in a body, and everyone of them clasping and kissing the Mayor as, it is safe to say, no incumbent of that office was ever hugged and kissed before—at least, during office hours.

"O, Gertrude," said Mrs. Blake, "we would never have put you in, if we'd known what it would bring you."

"To think we were letting you in for kidnaping and imprisonment," said Mrs. Turner.

"Like a criminal—or step-child," added Mrs. Mason.

"O, Gertie!" cried the fluffy woman known as Bella, "and I brought it on by telling you all that stuff my laundress told me. Rudolph says I did." And she burst into tears.

"Don't cry, Bella," said the mayor, soothingly. "I was finding things out, anyway. It would have been just the same in the end."

"But Rudolph says—" insisted the weeping one, when the push from behind carried her on out into the corridors.

Club-women, patriotic women, stay-at-home women were followed by women from the poorer classes who had waited until their morning's work was done before coming to tell the Mayor how glad they were to have her back. Then noon came, bringing young women from the stores and offices and factories, all eager to add their bit of welcome; and the school children, to shake her hand and go home and tell of this wonderful day, which afterward became a memory for a lifetime. When four o'clock came, Gertrude prepared to go home; to rest and sleep in her own bed, worn out with the

welcome of thousands of her people. Mary Snow had already succumbed to the demand on her energies and had gone an hour before.

"It's worth the whole gamut of experience," Gertrude said to herself as she closed her desk, "just to find out what it is to get at the heart of the American people. It's a great experience, and I shall be a better woman for it, all my days."

A step on the bare floor behind her. She looked up.

"I haven't had a chance to tell you in words how very, very glad I am," said Allingham, holding out his hand. "But —you know—"

"Yes," she said, taking it; "I know."

"Excuse me," said a voice, and a burly form pushed in from the outer office; "but I couldn't go home until I came to have one word with you, Miss Van Deusen.

You don't—you can't believe I had anything to do with getting you into that scrape?"

"No, Newton, I never believed it for a minute," said the mayor, "not after I realized you were not there, sick and in trouble. I know you too well."

"Thank you," said Fitzgerald. "I'm ready to go on the witness stand for you, any time. More than that, I'll run down the rascals that played you such a d—d trick, if it takes the last cent I've got."

CHAPTER XXIV

An Honest Confession

T THE first possible moment, Gertrude and Mary went carefully through the books and papers in their private desks. The first discovery they made was that all notes and papers pertaining to Vickery and the Boulevard Railway Company were missing, thus destroying every bit of evidence, beyond their spoken word, in that particular case. Other documents were missing also, and the trail of the corrupt politician was over all. She sent for Robert Joyce, the district attorney, and Bailey Armstrong, as city solicitor, and they held counsel together until the lengthening shadows drove them

home. But not until they had sent for Otis H. Mann, and put the case strongly to him. That functionary was, however, as smooth and oily as ever, disclaiming all knowledge of everything.

"I assure you, gentlemen," he said, "and you, madam, that only the most perfunctory of routine work has been done in this office while I was acting-mayor. It was our one object to let things slide along as easily as possible until the real mayor should return. We desired no radical changes, and on the other hand, as few breaks in the regular routine of city affairs as possible. I desired, above all, to be a faithful servant to the people—to—in short, ah—"

"How about those contracts you negotiated with Watts?" broke in Joyce.

"And McAlister's new job—under the name of Peter Grayson?" added Bailey.

Mann's face was a shade more purple

for an instant, but he went on, unctuously.

"The man who suddenly becomes the head of a city has a great responsibility —especially if he has been, in a sense, shut out from the confidence of its mayor up to the time of his incumbency. He cannot expect to please everyone. He will be called 'demagogue' by the opposite party; his motives will be misconstrued; his honesty brought in question, his principles—"

"O, spare us," interrupted Bailey. "While you were the head of this office, some important testimony has disappeared; private papers belonging to the mayor and her secretary were taken away, and several other questionable things were done. We called you here now, to explain these things; and if you cannot produce them, to say why. The least thing a man in your position can do is to institute a hearty search for the missing

papers, and to act in accord with us in leaving no stone unturned to find them."

"Gentlemen," said the chairman of the board of aldermen, rising and laying his hand impressively across his heart, "I will swear to you that the mayor's desk and her secretary's were turned over to her exactly as I found them. If anything has been taken from them, the robbery occurred either before I came or after I went out."

"And you are willing to pledge yourself to aid in discovering the thief, whoever and wherever he may be?" said Bailey, regarding Mann narrowly.

"On my word of honor," replied the chairman; and he could not help it if his words and tone sounded rather bombastic. "But, I am sorry, my dear lady—but I have a very important engagement at this hour—a personal matter, very dear to my heart, which compels me to ask you to

excuse me now. I shall be glad to call upon you tomorrow morning, at any hour you may name."

"Can you make it nine o'clock," asked Gertrude—"or even earlier?"

"Yes, we must get definitely to work tomorrow morning," added Joyce.

"Certainly, nine—or half past eight, if you choose," said Mann. "In the meantime I will try to recall the minutest particulars of my connection with this office. I am sure, my dear lady, you do not need to be assured of my loyalty to you—nor to my native city. And now—I bid you good-day." He bowed impressively and was gone.

"All the same, I don't like the cut of his jib," murmured Bailey.

"Oh, he's too much of a trimmer to go back on us now," said Joyce. "Public sentiment is all on our side now, and election day's coming."

Gertrude smiled. "I can't imagine why anybody should trim his sails to get an office," she said.

"Well, see what a dangerous thing it is to cultivate a taste for politics," retorted Bailey. "There's no knowledge where it may lead you."

"Oh, Miss Van Deusen will have a walkover when her turn for election comes again."

Gertrude remembered this remark as she sat in her library that evening, alone for the first time since she had set forth to call on Newton Fitzgerald.

"Having set my hand to the plough," (her favorite expression) "I suppose I must not look back," she soliloquized, "until the end of the furrow is reached. But I may look forward, and—if I live through the next few months, I wonder if anything or anybody can persuade me to be a candidate the second time. I don't

think so now. But how much more I know than I did last year!—only, of course, I cannot own it to any living soul. John Allingham ought to have beaten me. I wonder if he will run next year?" But in her heart she knew very well he would not oppose her again. "He would make an ideal mayor. Upright, honorable, fearless—and afraid of nothing but doing wrong. Ah, well—should it always take a man to deal with men—or shouldn't it? I don't know.

The maid entered.

"A man wishes to see you, Miss Van Deusen," said she. "He says he must talk to you personally. His name is Fitzgerald. But if you're too tired, Miss Van Deusen, I'll make him wait. If you'll excuse my saying so—you are too worn-down. These people ask too much of you."

"Show him right in here, Lizzie," an-

swered Gertrude. "And don't worry about me. I'm all right, now I am home."

A moment later Fitzgerald entered and stood, hat in hand.

"Excuse me, Miss Van Deusen," he began apologetically. "I've got something to confess—and I can't wait until morning—it'll be too late then."

"Go on," said Gertrude kindly. "Just trouble to shut that door into the hall, please, and then come over here by me."

The man did as he was told, and drew a chair near enough to her to be heard in low tones.

"Miss Van Deusen," he began; "it's just as I told you; I didn't know anything about the message they sent you, nor about the trap they set for you. But I have been knowing a good deal, and now —he's running away—and I'll be d——d if I won't tell you!"

"Sh—sh—who's running away?" inter-

rupted Gertrude. "Calm yourself, Newton, and tell me."

"Mann—the dirty whelp, after lining his pockets, and doing you all the harm he dares," he went on. "I've stood for him all I will. I've supported him and his cliques, and given house-room to his workers; and now he's—"

Gertrude saw it was useless to try to calm him, and wisely decided to let him work off his excitement by telling his story in his own way.

"And it's because Otis H. Mann, the people's friend, as he calls himself," explained Fitzgerald, impulsively, "has left town, bag and baggage, and will sail for foreign ports as soon as he strikes New York, that I'm telling."

"Tell me all you know, Newton. I've been wanting a good long talk with you for a long time. Begin at the beginning, please."

"Well, of course you know I'm a democrat. I've always voted with that party, and would have done so last fall, even against you—if it hadn't been for the job they put up on you. Yes—I mean the night before election. They talked it all over in a little room back of my saloon. The boss was there himself that night—"

"You mean Burke?" interrupted Gertrude.

"No—Mann. Burke's under his orders every time. Whatever Burke done, it was Mann behind him; and when Burke got a rake-off of a thousand, Mann got two. As I'm tellin' you, they arranged the whole affair in my rooms. There was Mann and Burke, and McAdoo, and one or two others, and myself. I ain't claiming to be any better than the rest. I was there—not that I was ag'in you, but because it was my room, and my liquor, and I'd always been in their confabs. I didn't

approve of them electric cabs and seizing you by main force, as it were, and rushing you out into the country; but Mann and Burke were determined to have it—and when I saw they were bound to do it, anyhow, I just had to agree; and to see that nothing happened to you, I went along, too. If they'd tried any funny business with you, I'd—well, I took my irons along."

"Newton!" cried Gertrude. "Were you there? You!"

"Yes," replied the man, grimly. "I was your chauffeur. I wouldn't trust you to anyone else. I ain't forgot all you and your father done for me when I was a kid."

"Newton, you've a queer sense of gratiture," she laughed, for the situation seemed not without humor. "You ran away with me to protect me."

"That's about the size of it. I didn't

know what the others might do; I did know I should bring you in safely."

"Where did you get that cab?" she asked him.

"It was one I ran all last summer out to my summer place at Itosco. It's stored there now. The other we got at Bonborough from a friend of Mann's. His chauffeur ran that. The third man was McAdoo."

"Then it was you who brought me—and Mr. Allingham—home?"

"Yes'm. And it was Mann's friend's machine that was wrecked; and they had hard work to get the remains of it dragged off and hidden before morning; but Mann is a slick one. As soon as we got in we reported to him and he had his men out there with plenty to help. But it's more about Mann I want to tell you. It ain't Vickery, you want to haul into court. It's Mann. He's made more'n a

hundred thousand off'n the city. He's pulled off already over thirty thousand on that Boulevard Railway scheme. Vickery's only a tool. If you'd bitten his bait and taken what they offered you, they had it planned that Mann was to be general manager. That railway would have swallowed up all the others; and then he was to be president. He means to be a millionaire yet. He will be, if you don't get him—and quick."

"Wait; let's call Bailey." She rang up on the telephone. "But you knew nothing about the trap they caught Miss Snow and me in?"

"No." He waited until she called up Bailey Armstrong, and requested him to come to the house at once.

"No," he went on. "I swear it. They knew I hadn't much sympathy for their plots against you and got shy of letting me in on them. But there's a barkeep in

my saloon—or was—who kept them posted. When you telepohned me that day, he put 'em wise right off, quick. Mann was the one who planned your imprisonment. He thought out all the details—I've only just found this out—and since his talk with you this afternoon, he thought you were getting wise, too. So he went right out, got his bag (which has been packed for some time) and took the night train East. He owes me a big bill—and more promises than he can ever pay. I've been getting sick of this kind of thing for weeks; now that he's proved the biggest kind of a coward, I've come straight to you. And I'm glad I did."

"Would you be willing to go into court and swear to all this?" asked Gertrude. "For that is what it will come to, Newton."

"All this and more," he answered. "If you can catch the dirty whelp before he

sails for foreign parts, I'll do my part to put him where he belongs. I'm sick of living the life of a dirty dog. I want to be a clean man. I want to be a respectable citizen for the sake of my boy and girl, Miss Van Deusen; and their mother thinks the world of you—and so do I, when you come to that."

"I am sure of that," answered Gertrude, smiling again at the thought that it was his loyalty which made of him her chauffeur on that memorable ride. "I shall depend on you now."

Thus it happened that Bailey Armstrong, who would trust no man to go alone, took the midnight train for the East, accompanied by the sheriff of Roma; and that, in due course of time, they returned to Roma, "bringing their sheaves with them" in the form of Otis H. Mann, Esq.

CHAPTER XXV

The Old, Old Story

HE trial which followed was perhaps the most exciting event in the history of Roma. The indictment of Mann involved that of eight others, all more or less prominent in city politics; and when the facts became known with regards to Mann's connection with all the events narrated by Fitzgerald, the citizens were unanimous in demanding his punishment.

Although the documental evidence in the city hall had all been destroyed or secreted, there were plenty of witnesses ready to testify to what they knew, as soon as they felt safe in doing so; and although the stenographer's notes and

Mary Snow's record of what took place while she was secreted in the closet during Vickery's proposals of graft to the mayor were not to be found, Mary's testimony was admitted. Gertrude Van Deusen and Newton Fitzgerald were the chief witnesses, however, and there were few of Mann's minions brave enough to stand by him in this emergency. The trial was not long, the jury was out fifteen minutes and the verdict was "guilty."

When the judge pronounced the penalty, "Ten years in state's prison and the restitution of every dollar you have taken from or through the city," Mann collapsed from the red-faced, pompous official, into the pitiable wretch; and there were few to say a good word for him when court adjourned and the people gathered in knots to talk over the trial. The judge's sentence for the rest of the grafters—from one to ten years' impris-

onment and complete restitution—met with hearty approval; and from that day municipal grafting suddenly declined in Roma, and honest politics began to be recognized.

Vickery was heard from soon after in Japan, but the chief offenders having been convicted, there was no further interest in bringing him—an outsider and a tool—to justice. The Boulevard Railway scheme was never heard of more.

As soon as the trial was fairly over and the delinquents safely lodged in jail, the Mayor called a meeting of the remaining councilmen. There were six vacancies—that number of Roma's aldermen being behind the bars of justice; and their places had to be filled.

"How shall this be done?" she asked of them, after calling the meeting to order and stating its object. "The city charter provides for the filling of vacan-

cies by the mayor; but the fathers who framed this charter could never have dreamed of this wholesale demand. I place it before you. Shall we select the best men for the places ourselves—for I should not dream of appointing any without suggestions from you—or shall we call a special election, and let these aldermen be chosen by the people for the unexpired term?"

There were good arguments on both sides, and every man spoke his mind—for once, without fear or favor. At last Geoffrey Mason made the decisive speech:

"We have come to the crisis of our municipal history. We have rid our local government of some of the worst demagogues with which any city ever was cursed; consequently, it is most important that we fill their places with men of wide views, unusual intelligence and absolute

fearlessness. We are not sure of what the voters may do if an election be called just now; but we are reasonably sure that we can pick out six men who will help make our system of government a model of its kind instead of a reproach and a by-word. Let us make our own selections—or, rather, help our mayor to make hers—and show this town what can be done with an honest and sane council, every man of whom has at heart the framing of a model municipality and the development of an ideal city. To this end, I move that the mayor, assisted by the entire council, shall fill the vacancies in our board."

This motion was carried without further debate, and some of the best and most public-spirited men in Roma were put into the vacant places. At last Gertrude had a city council which was in full sympathy with her, and ready to further

every good project she had under consideration.

At the first meeting of the completed council, they voted to adopt the new ordinance which was to provide for open bids on all contracts, to be signed by the mayor in the presence of his council; and also to pass others vital to the best interests of the city. It would be impossible, when they should have finished remodeling their city charter, for City Hall to be again the temple of the money-changers.

"We are going to experience a spasm of virtue now that will astonish the world," said Armstrong, as he sat at lunch with Allingham at the Union Club next day. "Let's hope it will swing the whole length of the pendulum from the point where it started last January. You must confess, the experiment of putting in a woman for mayor has been rather

a successful one, on the whole."

"I do," answered Allingham. "I'll admit it freely. But then, Gertrude Van Deusen is an exceptional woman."

"One of the greatest," said Bailey.

"Shall I offer my congratulations now?" asked Allingham, after a slight pause.

"How did you hear?" said Bailey, quickly. "Who told you?"

"I've seen it all along," answered Allingham. "No one has told me. Yes, she's a fine woman—the noblest I ever saw."

"Mary?—yes," said Bailey. "As fine as Gertrude, every bit."

"What?" gasped the other; "Mary Snow?"

"Why, yes, man," retorted Bailey. "What's the matter with you? Of course it's Mary Snow."

"Not Gertrude—Miss Van Deusen?"

said Allingham, in strained tones.

"Well, for one who is so sharp as to 'see it all along,' I must say you're a little off the mark," answered Bailey. "I've been engaged to Mary Snow ever since the night we found them in the flat, but she's determined not to have it announced until her time is up at City Hall. Gertrude?—yes, she's pure gold. I thought once I loved her, but she was wiser than I. Mary is the only woman in the world for me." Then, seeing the look on his friend's face, he exclaimed:

"See here, Jack, what's the matter? I never dreamed it."

"Do you believe, Bailey, I stand any show? I confess I"—Allingham stopped; he could not talk about it, even to Armstrong in this hour of confidence.

"'A woman-mayor? In Roma? I'm afraid it wouldn't do!'" quoted Bailey, teasingly.

"O, quit," answered Allingham. "That was before I knew her—knew anything."

" 'A woman's place is at home with her husband,' " Bailey went on with a wicked glee.

"And that's where I would put her!" retorted Allingham, with spirit. "At least, I'd give her the chance."

"Go in, my boy," said Bailey, reaching out his hand to grasp his friend's, "I don't know how she feels—she's not easily won, I know; but try it. Go in and win."

That afternoon the opportunity presented itself. Allingham walked home with the Mayor. She usually drove home, but the clear, cool air of the closing autumn day, coming after long hours in office, had tempted her to test her pedestrian powers, and she had left City Hall alone. Allingham, however, appeared at the gates and asked permission to join her.

"If you care for a brisk walk of two miles," she answered, genially. "Or even if you give out and desert me on the road, you may begin. O, how good it is to shake off the dust of City Hall and take a bit of good, healthful exercise. Walking is the best way I know to keep the cobwebs from your mental sky, or to restore your tired nerves and overworked brain to normal condition."

"I walk five or six miles every morning," answered Allingham. "I believe it's the way God meant human beings to get over the ground."

"Yes," she added. "Mother Nature invented walking, while man invented carriages and cars and motors. How are Blatchley and Watts getting on with—but there, I chose to walk just to get away from the cares of office; and here I am bringing them along with me. Let's be just a boy and girl walking home from

school together," she added, whimsically.

"Or man and woman walking through life together," he amended quickly.

She did not answer. The crises of her life did not usually find her so unprepared. They walked a little way in silence; then he spoke again.

"I love you, I want you. Won't you walk with me 'still farther on?' "

They had come to a shaded walk across a little bridge, and by a common impulse they lingered a little here. While she waited, a sudden vision came before her eyes—and her heart, which had been in a tumult at his first words, grew calm and cold. She saw, not the impassioned, tender man on the bridge, speaking in low, musical tones of love and devotion and his need of her; but the strong, self-sufficient, young chairman in his office of the Municipal League—the man who had seemed to her to have the least compre-

hension of the complex modern woman of anyone she had ever met.

"No, no," she said, drawing away from hm. "You do not know what you are saying. It cannot be."

"I know that our lives can never be complete while they run apart," he answered from the depths of his emotion. "I know that you need me as much as I need you—and because we are meant for each other; because God made us for each other."

"You do not know what you are saying," she replied, moving on briskly in the direction of home. "You happen to be drawn towards me now—by force of propinquity, perhaps; or because you were good enough to worry about me during my exile—"

"As though I could help it," he cried; "O, God, those days and nights of uncertainty!"

"But when you go home and think this over, you will thank me," she went on. "We are not fitted for each other. We are not meant for each other. I am what you call an advanced woman—your women-folks go farther and call me strong-minded. I have been brought up that way, and all my associations in life have developed that spirit within me. You have always looked upon women as inferior beings—Oh, yes, you have. You, too, were brought up that way. Even now you would tell me I am an exceptional woman—if I let you."

"You are," interrupted Allingham. "By Heaven, you are."

"But if I were to marry you," she pursued, still talking to the young man she had seen that morning a year ago in the Municipal League rooms, "you would soon resent my attitude towards life; you would want to restrict my life, to sur-

round me with invisible limitations, such as you believe all femininity should be hedged with. I couldn't endure it. I never had to, and I couldn't submit to being estimated every day and in the intimacy of home life—according to the old-fashioned standards that narrow a woman's heart and mind until they hold nothing but pettiness and smallness and meanness of spirit. Because I couldn't, I should make you the most unhappy of men."

"But, Gertrude, hear me," he pleaded. "The past year has been a revelation. You have been a revelation to me."

"Yes, I," she retorted. "Not the eternal principles of manhood and womanhood, walking together—different and yet alike—only I—"

"I swear to you," he cried, "I have come to see that a woman may be all womanly and yet be as much a power and

a worker in the world as her husband; that her place is where she can be of the greatest help to humanity."

"No," said Gertrude firmly, for his expression as he spoke the last sentence, was that of the man who had scorned the proposition of a woman for mayor—"no; we are radically opposed to each other. We are not just a boy and girl who might grow together in spite of all differences. We are a man and woman of strong opinions, just as unlike as possible. We should quarrel fearfully; and life is given us for something better than bickering and growing to hate each other. No, I say—no."

"Perhaps I'd better leave you here," said Allingham, coldly, when she stopped. And raising his hat, he turned down a side street. Somehow the charm of the long walk had fled and Gertrude hurried her steps, too, taking the shortest route to

Van Deusen Hall. But when she was safely sheltered by the four walls of her own room, the strong-willed mayor of Roma threw herself on the bed and indulged in a good cry. For deep down in her heart, she knew she had done wrong—a wrong to the man who loved her—a wrong to her own better nature.

Later she went down to her dinner and faced the world again, cool and dignified; and no one could have dreamed that under her smiling exterior she was hiding a heart-ache.

CHAPTER XXVI

Retrospect and Prophecy

JUST two years after the luncheon of the "Progressive Workers," at which the first proposition was made to elect a woman-mayor, the executive board met again to discuss plans for the coming winter. For the first time in many months Gertrude Van Deusen was with them. She had been obliged to forego club-meetings for the most part, unless she would neglect the affairs of her office, and she had all the woman's conscientious scruples about routine and detail.

"Well," said Mrs. Mason, who was president this year, "we can claim credit for a lot of good work in the past year

or two. At last, we are a power in the city in fact, as well as in name."

"Yes," said Mrs. Bateman, "we are a recognized factor in public affairs. The chairman of the Municipal League came to me the other day to know what we propose to do about the winter campaign in politics and in civics."

"They know they can't do much without us," murmured the fluffy little woman in a new blue gown. "My husband says so."

"One doesn't wonder," said Cornelia Jewett, "when one looks over the city. We have our markets inspected, have shut up saloons and worse places, have put two women on the school board, cleaned the streets, established vacation schools and playgrounds, and elected a mayor."

"And by electing our mayor, have cleaned up the city pretty thoroughly from corruption," added Mrs. Turner.

"For if Burke had been elected, things would have gone from bad to worse; if Allingham—well, I'm a little afraid of our men's doctrine of *laissez-faire.*"

"Oh, I think Mr. Allingham would have done just as good work as has been done," said Gertrude, speaking for the first time. "He is both fearless and conscientious, and the moment he saw any sign of graft, he would have attacked it with courage and skill—and with less spectacular consequences than we did, perhaps," she added, smiling.

"I do not believe it," answered Mrs. Bateman. "He has developed wonderfully and is a man to be depended upon now; but it took you, Gertrude, to educate him."

The Mayor looked up quickly. The little episode on the bridge had never been told or repeated. Did anybody mistrust? But Mrs. Bateman kept on:

"There are thousands of good men who need awakening as to what women may do in the way of cleaning up a city, both literally and metaphorically. It takes both the man and the woman to make the model home; why not the model city?"

"We are going to have the honor of electing you again this winter, Gertrude?" asked Mrs. Mason. "May we announce it?"

"I scarcely think so," answered Gertrude. "I have done my full duty. I have given two years of the hardest work of which I am capable to my city. I stepped in as an emergency candidate; but now we shall find no difficulty in finding a candidate. Indeed, I may say that one is already being considered, although his name I must not tell."

"O, it's a shame that our men would think of setting up an opposition candidate," cried the fluffy lady, "after the

splendid way you've filled the breach. My husband shall never countenance it in the world."

"Don't get excited, Bella," soothed Gertrude. "I may as well tell you, for it is a matter of considerable pride to me, that the regular committee from the Republican party has already waited upon me and asked me to accept the nomination again—"

She was interrupted by a vigorous clapping of hands.

"But the more I think it over, the more I feel that I did right in saying no," she went on. "I realize that I was an experiment—happily successful. But I believe it will be better all round now, to return to our normal condition, with a man in the mayor's chair."

"Only he must be a good one," said Mrs. Stillman, "one who will carry on your policy. And I can think of several

who might be willing, now that you have performed the Herculean task—and who will keep the Augean stables clean."

"Rather than see them put a demagogue into my place I would try to keep it," answered Gertrude. "But with such good men in City Hall as we now have, there is no longer need for a woman there. I bespeak your co-operation for my successor, whose name shall be known in a few days, although I do not think he has consented yet. But when he does, and the candidate is announced, you must all work to elect him. Then I shall retire to private life—thank Heaven!"

"You aren't going to follow Mary Snow's example, are you?" asked the fluffy woman, saucily. "My husband says they are the happiest couple and the best mated, he ever saw."

"Your husband is right, Bella," said Gertrude. "Now, my friends, I must go.

I have some work waiting in my office and two or three appointments to be made."

"Do you suppose she'd let us make her the next president of the P. W.'s?" asked Bella, when the mayor left the room.

"Bless you, no!" answered Mrs. Bateman. "What would a woman who has been mayor of a city want of our little club-presidency? Let her take the rest she has earned. She needs it; she is looking worn and pale."

"No wonder. I wish she would marry some nice man," answered the irrepressible Bella.

"There isn't any good enough for her," said Mrs. Mason shortly. "Now, ladies, if there is any business to be done, let's get at it."

When Gertrude arrived at her office John Allingham was waiting for her. She had not seen him alone for months, except for the few brief moments when

he had been forced to consult her in regard to some detail of his department work. He looked anxiously at her when she entered the room, not dreaming that her heart was leaping in her bosom at sight of him.

"I want to see you alone a few minutes," he began.

The stenographer rose mechanically and withdrew, closing the door behind her.

"See here,—what is this about your retiring from office," he asked. "You mustn't do it."

"Mustn't I?" she asked.

"By no means," he answered decisively. "You have everything in good running order, your enemies routed, the grafters where they belong, a year of steady improvement under the new order of things, —and the public all with you. It is not right for you to leave now."

"Yes, it is," she answered, getting con-

trol of herself. "And it is time for you to take my place."

"I can't,—I have no desire to be mayor. You have proved your fitness for the post," he went on earnestly. "You have proved what a woman can do. Now keep on."

"No," she answered. "I want you to prove what you can do. The commititee have asked you to stand?"

"Yes,—but then,—you should take another two years to fully establish and carry out the work you have begun. You see I have completely revised my ideas concerning a woman for mayor."

"Yes, thank you," she replied. "But, listen. I have, under God, had a successful term; I have been able to put through several changes for the better—with the help of good men like you. I am—yes, I admit it,—I am popular today with the people. But popularity is an uncertain

thing, and there is no telling how soon it may wane. I am wise in letting go, while I am on the top-wave. Now, honestly, don't you think so?"

"If popularity is all you think of, yes," answered Allingham. "But it isn't."

"No, it isn't," she admitted. "But if you must have the truth, I'll go farther and say, the innovation of trying a woman for mayor was an experiment. The new broom has swept clean, and people are pleased so far. But the natural and right way of cities is to have a man at the helm. Between you and me, it is the fore-ordained method of nature to keep the man at the head of things, to take the brunt, to face the danger. Say what you will, the woman was not meant for this kind of thing. As we go on with our municipal life the realization of this is going to grow upon the people. While they are fully appreciative of all I have tried to

do, there will develop the old desire for a man at the helm—and then comes discontent. Indeed, I can already see signs of it. You are the right man for the place. I shall always be thankful for the experience I have had; but I want no more." She smiled up at him. "I am more than content to pass it along,—not alone because the burden is heavy, and I am growing selfish,—but because you are the right man for mayor of Roma."

"Then if it is your wish," Allingham replied, "I will consent." He rose to go. "If only we might stand at the head together," he said. "With you to give a man courage—"

Gertrude interrupted him. "We should not be in accord. We could never agree. Don't talk about it." She rang the bell for the stenographer, and Allingham turned to go.

"May I say," she added, relenting at

the expression on his face, "that you have done splendid work in your department? You have achieved the wonderful feat of improving our streets and keeping expenses down at the same time."

"That was not difficult," he answered, "where the opposite had been the practice for so long. I'm going down now to inspect that street we are laying out just back of your place. I'm sorry there had to be blasting."

"The street will be all the more picturesque when it's done," she replied. "Good afternoon, and thank you, for what you promised."

"O, I wonder if I can hold out," she said to herself as he went out. "If he had said another word, I should have given in,—but he didn't."

Still, that he would say it some other time, she knew. Then she would have to say yes.

CHAPTER XXVII

A Heart's Awakening

THERE were the afternoon letters to dictate, which took her nearly an hour; and there were callers who kept her in the office until nearly five o'clock. When they had all left she sat for a moment, resting and reviewing the events of the day.

"I wonder if I've done right," she queried. "He will succeed me and do great things for Roma, but O, I wish I could help him. I wish I dared let myself love him as he deserves. I wish I were one of the softer, clinging women, made to love a man and to depend on him for happiness. After all, they are

the fortunate ones. But,—what am I saying? Brace up, Gertrude Van Deusen; don't be a sentimental girl! You've prided yourself on your independence of mind and heart. At your age, to be thinking of a man,—and one whose ideal is so far from what you know yourself to be! I'll go to Europe this winter and stay a year. I'll soon get back to my old spirit, and cease to think—"

The telephone rang.

"Well?" she asked.

"There's been an explosion down back of your house among the street-department's tools," some one was saying. "Two men were hit by flying rocks and hurt, we fear badly. One of them was a laborer,—"

"And the other?" asked Gertrude quickly, her heart divining the truth.

"Was Commissioner Allingham. He had just come to inspect the work. May

we take them to your house until we can get the ambulance and the doctors?"

"Take them there at once," she responded. "Get the doctors, but don't call the ambulances yet—until we know what to do with the men. I'll be right down."

She flew to her closet and hurried into her coat. At the door, her carriage waited and she gave orders to drive as fast as possible. Then she sat back against the luxurious cushions, trying to control the terror that had come suddenly upon her spirit. She no longer doubted and hesitated. The shock had revealed the depths of her own heart which she had not sounded. She came in a moment to know that love is not a feeling to be analyzed or nurtured or trained into growth; the thing she had been repressing and torturing into subjection suddenly became a divine, reverential passion.

As they drove through the tree-shaded streets she trembled lest John Allingham might already have crossed the mysterious boundary which separates the living from the dead, and she would meet only a life-long sorrow at her door,—a sorrow which would crown her life with sanctifying, uplifting influences, even though it crushed her heart and benumbed her soul. But even that, she realized, was infinitely better than the starving of love with which she had been cheating herself. She bent her head and prayed while the carriage rolled rapidly on under the overarching elms and up the graveled driveway to her house.

Once within she passed rapidly upstairs, unfastening her wraps as she did so, and going towards the rooms where she knew the injured men would be carried. They had been taken, she was told, to her father's old room, where the doc-

tor was already with them. Dared she go in?

Throwing her wraps in at the door to her own apartment, she turned again towards the sick-chamber. And then she stood face to face with John Allingham.

"John," she sobbed. "O, John."

Taken by itself, it was a meaningless sentence; but it satisfied him. He held out his arms and she nestled into them.

"You are really not fit to walk alone," she smiled up at him after an eloquent moment. "Ask me again to walk with you."

So it fell out that on the eve of the next mayor's inaugural, there was a wedding; and all of Roma rejoiced with the couple who pronounced the holy vows. For the loving heart of the woman was to stand alongside the strong desire of the man; and all Roma would be guided and helped by the two.

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